

Dear all, greetings once again.

We continue with our discussion of end-time deceptions in the worldwide remnant.

Jesus Christ revealed to His followers that Satan is as a ‘roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour’ (1 Peter 5.8), that Satan is wroth at being cast out of heaven and has come down to earth ‘with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short’ (Rev. 12.12). Jesus was clear that false prophets would arise who would seek to deceive even the very elect (Matt. 7.15 and Mark 13.22), Paul made it clear that false teachers would arise from within the ranks of the faithful (Acts 20.29) and John made it clear that the spirit of antichrist was already operative in the time of apostolic church (1 John 2.18).

An overview of Scripture reveals that Satan works to deceive and destroy either directly, or through intermediaries. Intermediaries may be demons, natural forces of nature, false teachers, false messiahs, false prophets, godless earthly powers and rulers that know not God.

When we look specifically at what Scripture reveals about Satan’s end-time deceptions, we are warned by God of personal satanic deceptions and specific counterfeits.

2 Thess. 2.8 refers at the end of the verse to the ‘*parousia*’ of Jesus Christ, i.e. His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming, at which time He will destroy Satan. The next verse, 2 Thess. 2.9 begins with the ‘*parousia*’, although not of Jesus Christ, but of the ‘lawless one’, which is normally understood as being a counterfeit *parousia* in which Satan impersonates the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ to a gullible world.

2 Thess. 2.9 refers not only to a counterfeit *parousia* of Satan, but also to a counterfeit ministry of Satan, seeking to impersonate the ministry of Jesus Christ and thus lead the nations into deception. 2 Thess. 2.9 refers to a ministry of ‘power, signs and lying wonders’ that Satan will seek to undertake after his counterfeit *parousia*, a ministry of deception that appears to be the very ministry of Jesus Christ Himself! In Acts 2.22, Peter refers to the ministry of Jesus as being one of ‘power, signs and wonders’ in his speech at Pentecost. The counterfeit ministry of Satan will appear to be that of Jesus, the only difference being that in 2 Thess. 2.9 Satan’s ministry is a ‘lying’ ministry.

Rev. 13 also refers to another deception by Satan – a counterfeit trinity (I am indebted to Dr Jon Paulien for the following discussion on the counterfeit trinity). Whereas these false teachers in our midst argue that the Trinity doctrine of God per se is unbiblical per se (an issue we will address below), Jesus reveals in His revelation to us that Satan will seek to deceive the world through an unholy, counterfeit trinity in the final struggle between good and evil.

Whilst Revelation 12 provides an overview, a panoramic view, of the struggle between God’s faithful remnant and Satan, Revelation 13 provides a more detailed breakdown of how Satan will seek to attack God’s people, culminating in the coercion to accept the ‘mark of the beast’ and Revelation 14 contains God’s response to Satan’s attacks on His people, with a call to faithfulness to resist Satan and his earthly representatives.

Within this context, Revelation 13 has 3 major players: the dragon, the sea beast, and the land beast. Together, this unholy alliance of 3 powers constitute an unholy, counterfeit trinity. How can this be?

Firstly, concerning the dragon. The dragon appears to have fundamental authority over the forces attacking God's remnant. He is associated with the serpent in the Garden of Eden, and Scripture calls him the devil and Satan (Rev. 12.9). In Rev. 13, the dragon shares his power and authority with the land beast and the sea beast. So the dragon appears to be the great counterpart to the part played by God the Father in the universe and in the great controversy between good and evil.

Secondly, concerning the sea beast. It appears as if the Revelation portrays the sea beast as a satanically inspired counterfeit to Jesus Christ Himself. Rev. 13.1 states 'And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.' This isn't the first time we have come across a beast with 7 heads and 10 horns – Satan himself, the dragon of Rev. 12.3, is also represented as having 7 heads and 10 horns. In John 14.9, Jesus states that 'anyone who has seen me has seen the Father', i.e. in seeing Jesus we see God the Father – just as in the counterfeit trinity, the sea beast resembles the dragon, who is the counterfeit of the Father.

Rev. 13.2 states 'And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.' This text tells us that the sea beast receives his authority from the dragon, reminding us of what Jesus taught in Matthew 28.18, 'And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.' Just as Jesus received His authority from His Father, so the sea beast receives his authority from the dragon, i.e. once again the sea beast relates to the dragon as Jesus relates to His Father.

Rev. 13.3 states 'And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.' The Apostle John doesn't want us to miss this important counterfeit ministry of the sea beast. Rev. 13.8 states that 'And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.' The word for 'slain' or 'slaughtered' for Jesus is exactly the same word used of the sea beast in Rev. 13.3 (translated above as 'wounded to death'). The sea beast experiences a death, and then a resurrection – as did Jesus Christ.

Rev. 13.4 tells us that 'And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?' This passage has the phrase 'who is like the beast', which is very similar to one of the names for Jesus Christ, Michael (who is like God?) Once again, we see that the sea beast is a counterfeit of Jesus Christ.

Rev. 13.5 tells us that the sea beast has a ministry that lasts for 42 months (And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two months.) Whilst in the historical mode of prophetic interpretation this is normally interpreted as being a period of 3.5 years or 1,260 days, corresponding to the same prophetic time period of the 4<sup>th</sup> beast of Daniel 7, understood literally, 42 months is literally 3

years and 6 months – 3.5 years, or the period of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, from fall AD27 (His baptism) to spring AD31 (His death at Passover time).

In essence, whilst the dragon is a counterfeit of God the Father, the sea beast is a counterfeit for God the Son. The sea beast walks, looks and talks like Jesus Christ, but is really a perversion of everything Jesus stands for. To complete unholy, counterfeit trinity, we come to the land beast, a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit.

Rev. 13.11 states that ‘And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.’ The land beast has ‘two horns like a lamb’. The word ‘lamb’ occurs 29 times in Revelation, and 28 of them refer to Jesus Christ....with the sole exception being this verse, which refers to a power that operates against God and His people. This beast seems a lot like Jesus Christ....how then is it a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit? In John 14.16, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit as ‘another comforter’, i.e. the Holy Spirit was not the original comforter, but the original comforter is Jesus Christ Himself. The work of the Holy Spirit was to replace the activity of Jesus in the disciples’ lives. The Spirit’s work is modeled on that of Jesus, and He operates on behalf of Jesus.

Rev. 13.12 states that ‘And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.’ The land beast is uninterested in promoting himself, but his purpose is to advance the power and interests and prominence of the sea beast. The Holy Spirit does not promote Himself, but glorifies Jesus, points to Jesus, brings to remembrance the words of Jesus (John 16.13-14). So the land beast relates to the sea beast in the same way that the Holy Spirit relates to Jesus Christ.

Rev. 13.13 states that ‘And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.’ Did the Holy Spirit ever bring down fire from heaven? Yes – at Pentecost in Acts 2. On that occasion the Holy Spirit brought fire from heaven to earth to anoint the original disciples. It was the greatest and most powerful act of the Holy Spirit up until that time. So, the land beast performs another act reminiscent of the Holy Spirit – fire from heaven.

The land beast not only counterfeits the general function of the Holy Spirit, but he specifically counterfeits Pentecost itself. The activity of the land beast at the end of time precipitates a powerful spiritual revival that counters the work of the Holy Spirit, and why does he do this? Rev. 13.14 states clearly the purpose: And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.’ The purpose is to deceive humanity.

Revelation 13 points to a final worldwide deception in which a counterfeit trinity stands in the place of the true God, and the counterfeit Pentecost confuses people about the true God and His purposes in the last days of earth’s history.

The unholy, counterfeit trinity will seek the worship of the world’s inhabitants, either freely or by coercion, if necessary. On the one hand, the counterfeit trinity will seek to counterfeit the work of

God and to deceive the world to give their allegiance freely: on the other hand, those who refuse to be deceived may be forced, threatened or coerced to give their loyalty to the counterfeit trinity.

And Satan’s counterfeits do not end there.....

Revelation 14 presents the response of the Triune God to the counterfeit trinity of Revelation 13. In response, God sends 3 angels to carry 3 important messages to the world in the final crisis between good and evil. Does Satan have his own counterfeit? Absolutely! In Revelation 16, in the final 7 plagues, we find the following written about the final conflict (referred to as ‘Armageddon’ in verse 16): ‘And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. <sup>13</sup> And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup> For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.’

Rev. 16.14 tells us that these three frogs are the ‘spirits of devils’ or ‘spirits of demons’. What is a demon? A demon is a fallen angel. So just as God sends 3 angels with a message for mankind, so Satan sends 3 fallen angels with a message for mankind – gathering them to battle against God.

What are we to conclude from the above discussion about Satan’s deceptions? Satan works through many means, but in the last days he will work primarily through deception and counterfeit, to deceive the ‘very elect’ as Jesus warned. We find in the above texts the following counterfeits:

Counterfeit ‘appearance’ of Satan	True appearance of Jesus Christ.
Counterfeit message for mankind through 3 fallen angels.	3 un-fallen angels with a message for mankind.
Counterfeit ministry of Jesus Christ by Satan.	The true ministry of Jesus Christ.
Counterfeit trinity.	The Triune God.
Counterfeit of the Father (by the dragon).	The Father.
Counterfeit of the Son (by the sea beast).	The Son.
Counterfeit of the Holy Spirit (by the land beast)	The Holy Spirit
Counterfeit end time spiritual revival / Pentecostal experience.	The true Pentecostal experience / outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

How does this relate to our study on the existence of the Holy Spirit, and the Triune God? Simply this: Satan’s deceptions involve the deliberate counterfeiting of that which is true in order to deceive, and Satan only needs to counterfeit, and indeed can only present a counterfeit, when there is a true original: a true Pentecost experience and outpouring of the Holy Spirit; a true ministry of power, signs and wonders by Jesus Christ; a true 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus Christ; a true sending of 3 un-fallen angels with God’s last message of warning and call of mercy to mankind; and a true Triune God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And so, returning to our underlying question, i.e. that of the nature of the Godhead, some today are arguing that a) the Godhead consists of the Father and the Son, without the Holy Spirit as

person within the Godhead (i.e. a bi-une understanding of God and a subordinated understanding of God the Son); and that b) Satan has always sought to present pagan trinities to divert people from the true worship of the true (bi-une) God. Such pagan trinities are presented as being in Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, Hindu, Roman Catholic and other national and / or religious cultures, and we must recognize that such alternative / pagan trinities have existed and exist to this day. Such pagan trinities are undeniable when one studies history of religions and comparative religion.

However, the fact that pagan trinities are traceable in religions and cultures back to Mesopotamia does not mean by definition the true God is not a Triune God as some suggest. On the contrary, and as we have seen above, Scripture consistently portrays satanic deceptions as coming through satanic counterfeits of the truth, of the true originals, and the consistent presence of pagan trinities from the modern era in religions and cultures back to the time of Nimrod and the tower of Babel suggests not that God is a bi-une god, but that Satan has sought to obscure the truth about the true Triune God in every culture, era and religion with a counterfeit / pagan trinity.

With this in mind, we will continue this discussion in our next Worldview....

Have a blessed Sabbath!

Conrad.