

Christians are Trinitarian.

Which means that we believe in the Trinity.

We worship one God in three persons.

This morning as we continue our study in Revelation, we are going to see that Satan does his best to imitate the Trinity.

And we especially see this false and unholy imitation in the end times.

Satan himself is an imitation of God the Father, who he tried to replace.

The antichrist is an imitation of God the Son, who is Jesus Christ.

And the false prophet is an imitation of God the Spirit, who is the Holy Spirit.

The rest of this chapter is all about the 2nd beast, who is the false prophet.

And what I want us to see this morning is how this false prophet operates.

What we will see as we look closely is that this is not new.

The demonic realm and Satan does not have separate plans for the end times.

He does not operate one way today and then will do something else weird and random at the end.

He continues to do the same things in every age.

Because he does not know when the end will come.

And he does not know when God will stop holding him back.

So, in the final age, they increase in their intensity.

So, as we study this final false prophet closely, it will allow us to be better prepared for how the smaller false prophets operate today.

We will be better equipped to identify the false spirits of this age.

I. The false prophet uses deceptive teaching while the Holy Spirit uses unadorned truth (v. 11).

Verse 11, ***"Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon."***

The first characteristic of the false prophet is the deceptive teaching.

We see from the very description of the beast.

Its very appearance and how it looks is intentionally deceptive.

It is a beast, like the antichrist.
It arises from the sea, like the other enemies of God.
But it has horns like a lamb.
It is coming in the appearance of a lamb.

Just like Satan, who appears as an angel of light.
The false prophet wants to appear like Jesus.
It wants to appear as a wolf in sheep's clothing.
He has the horns of the lamb.
Because he wants people to think he is a prophet of the lamb.
False prophets never announce themselves as false.
They never come out and tell everyone they are going to lead you astray.
They do not announce that they serve the dragon.
They outwardly look like the lamb.
But when you look close, then you can tell the voice is the dragon's.

We have examples of this.
There are false teachers amongst us who will claim to love the lamb.
Ask a Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness what they think about the Bible and Jesus.
And they will say wonderful things.
They will probably even say they are a Christian just like you.
And if you are not paying attention.
If you are not listening closely, then you might miss the false teaching.

We see this with plenty of others as well.
There are those who love to quote Bible verses.
Those who even dare to stand in pulpits and preach in churches.
They will read from some Scriptures.
They will feign obedience to Christ.
They will use Biblical language and talk about Judeo-Christian values.
But their teaching will not be Christian.
It will not be the teaching of the lamb, but the voice of the dragon.

So, how can we tell?

How are we to determine whether something is false teaching.

And to be clear, when I am talking about the false teaching of the dragon.

When I am talking about false teaching that comes from the false prophet and from the pit of hell.

I do not just mean teaching that you disagree with.

This is much heavier than someone maybe misunderstanding the Greek words in the Bible or having a different, but valid interpretation.

These are false teachings that if you continue to consume them will lead you away from Jesus and right into the mouth of the dragon.

So, we need to examine the teaching we hear.

We cannot assume because someone went to the right seminary.

Or because someone has a big church, or has written a successful book.

Or they have a nice big platform that their teaching is true.

Because the false prophet loves to deceive.

How can we identify false teaching?

First, we need to compare the teaching we hear to the Scriptures.

We need to examine it all.

Be like a good Berean who heard from Paul and then studied the Word themselves.

Also, something we forget about the Bereans.

They did not do it on their own.

They gathered around the Bible and asked questions together.

They did it as a church and as a community.

False teaching thrives when we isolate ourselves.

It loves us to try and think through it on our own without the body of Christ.

So we should compare the teaching we hear to the Scriptures.

And compare it to all of the Bible.

Not just what does this little passage say here.

But what does it say everywhere?

Someone will try to say, well Jesus called the Pharisees vipers so I can curse and call unbelievers names.

Our response should be to not just look at that passage, but look at other places where the Bible discusses how we should speak.

We also should compare the teaching we hear from would be prophets to the teachings of the apostles.

We compare the teaching we hear to the essentials of the faith.

We compare it to the creeds and beliefs the universal church has held to.

We ask if this matches up to what believers have always thought.

And we look to see if this teaching matches any heresy or false teaching from the past.

In the rare occasion, something is totally new and we haven't never heard it before.

Or no one in the history of the church has ever taught this, then you can go ahead and discount it.

Because it is almost certainly false teaching.

Or you need to read more because it might not be as new as you think.

And here is one of the big things you should watch out for.

Beware when people's appeal to what God has told them.

Beware when it is based primarily on personal experience.

When they claim that God told them something.

People will say that God loves them and just wants them to be happy.

So, they don't need to worry about living with their girlfriend or boyfriend and can have sex when they want.

Or that the peace that comes from embracing their gender is just proof that God got it wrong.

I've had people tell me that God told them it was fine to look at porn or to leave their wife for their mistress.

It's also worth asking is this teaching leading me to increase in my love and devotion to Jesus and to God and my love for others.

Often false teaching will do is will increase our love for ourselves.

It will increase and speak to our own desires on our own ones and will be leading us away from God and away from other people.

It will especially lead us away from the church.

Lot's of people hear false prophets telling them that they don't need the church.

They may even be closer to God if they worship on their own.

As if you can grow in your love for Jesus while ignoring His body.

One of the best ways as well to learn with the voice of the dragon sounds like is to pay attention to the voice of the Shepherd.

To listen closely to God's voice

Especially to listen to His voice as it's clearly given in the scriptures.

To listen to the voice of God, as it comes through the body of Christ in the church in the community of Jesus

And listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

As you get better at listening to the voice of God, it will keep you from hearing other voices that try to drown out

The result of all this was teaching comes in verse 12, **"it exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed."**

The false prophet is working to get us to worship the antichrist.

The purpose of false teaching is very similar.

It is trying to divert our worship away from our creator.

Away from Jesus

Away from lamb of God

And push our worship towards other things.

The false prophets turn our worship away from Jesus and towards ourselves.

He wants to turn our worship away from Jesus and towards sexuality or away from Jesus and towards idolatry.

And so the false prophet is worked on directing this worship, particularly at this moment in time towards the anti-Jesus

It is worth it to spend some time seeing how the false prophet fails in comparison to the Holy Spirit.

And I want us to gaze and reflect on the beauty and wonder of God. Because He is the opposite of the false prophet in many ways.

The Holy Spirit does not deceive.

He does not ever need to suspend the truth.

He does not twist it or add to it.

He simply reveals what is true.

This is what the gift of prophecy is.

It is not telling us the future.

It is revealing the truth of the world around us.

The Holy Spirit tells us the honest truth about ourselves we need to hear.

It tells us the truth about the world.

And it tells us the truth about God.

Even when the truth hurts.

Even when the truth is bad news.

Even when we do not want to hear it.

It tells us the truth.

And the Holy Spirit does not play games.

The truth is unadorned.

By that I mean the Holy Spirit does not feel the need to pretty up and decorate the truth.

The Spirit does not add extra things to the truth to make it more palatable.

Nor to make it more attractive and interesting for us.

There is no need for manipulation.

This is one of the things Paul says when he describes his own preaching.

He does not preach with power or rhetorical speech.

He just gives the plain message of the gospel and that is enough.
He does not preach like all the fancy philosophers of the day who are worried about their charisma and great turns of phrase.
He just tells them about Christ.

The apostles themselves had no formal training in speech.
They were ordinary men and fishermen.
Regular people who turned the world upside down because the Holy Spirit revealed the truth of Jesus.
Moses was one of the greatest prophets in Israel's history and had a stutter.

But today so many of us are tempted by glamour.
Our age today demands having its ears tickled.
Everything is demanding our attention.
The average video now has dozens of constant cuts and music and adornment.
Because no one wants to just sit and listen to someone talk for 30 seconds.
And so we can be tempted in the church.
We can think we need to add bells and whistles.
We need to follow the algorithm so as many people see as possible.
Maybe if we can go viral then revival will break out.
But the Holy Spirit does not need to pretty things up.
His power does not depend on our charisma or ability.
The Holy Spirit can speak through you.
With the unadorned truth of the gospel.
And it is more than enough.

II. The false prophet uses false wonders while the Holy Spirit uses transformative power (v. 12-15).

The false prophet loves to use signs and wonders.
It wants to get attention by doing amazing things.

Verse 13, **"It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,"**

One of the great signs was the miraculous healing of the antichrist.

But we also see that the signs and wonders are described as great.

This is a similar way that Moses had his signs described.

The greatest prophet in Israel's history is described as working great signs and wonders.

And the other greatest prophet is your history, Elijah was known for calling fire down from heaven.

I want us to see that these false teachers and especially the false prophet is not gonna come with little parlor tricks.

These are not minor things.

These will be great and impressive signs.

These are not gonna be like charlatans today who will pretend to heal someone out of a wheelchair.

Or who will mentally and emotionally manipulate someone into thinking they've been healed for a moment.

Sometimes even today they are great signs.

And they certainly will be in the final days.

They will not be able to be explained by science, and they will be supernatural wonders.

This means that the false prophet does actually have power

Like the magicians who opposed Moses, it is able to do things that amaze

It is actually able to work wonders that cannot be explained by any natural means.

Versus 14, **"and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived."**

We see that it has this power because one God is allowing it to do so

The false prophet does not have power because it is so awesome.

It is not a true rival power to God its signs and wonders are not as amazing and it is not in any real sense in competition with God
But it uses this power in order to deceive

The entire purpose of the signs and the wonders is in order to give cover for the false teaching
And the purpose behind the signs is in order that people would listen to what the dragon says.
And it works these wonders so that people would worship the antichrist.

This is a very different purpose than the signs of the Holy Spirit.
The signs that Christ worked.
Where the signs of God were meant to bring salvation into the world at a point to Jesus, under the true worship of God here the signs are meant to point people away from God

The signs are deceptive because there's no real substance to them
In many ways, they work like a magic trick they make you clap and don't have the power to deliver you

And his counterfeit signs continue as he makes an image of the beast.
Verse 15, **"And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak"**

The false prophet is continuing the false work as the antithesis of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and created and established the body of Christ

Humanity made in the image of God that displays Jesus to the world

And here we have a twisted version where the false prophet makes an image of the antichrist.

And they create an image of the beast who is wounded and yet lives

It is described as giving breath to the image.

This is a copy of how the spirit of God breathed into the dust and made man

And now this image can speak and act.

It does not actually have life.

But it appears to be so.

A great sign and wonder.

Well, we need to understand the main thing I want us to take away here
At least our application today is that we need to beware of signs and wonders

We need to understand and to recognize that just because something miraculous happens, it does not mean it is of God

Just because a miracle happens, it does not mean it is of God.

Even if someone comes who looks like a follower of the lamb and who says things that sound Christian and does something we can explain except by the power of God, that does not mean that we should listen
Because all of the signs and all of these wonders are meant to turn the hearts of the people away from God

This is a problem we face all the time, and I see people fooled by this in the church.

Because we are impressed even now by signs of power or by signs of God moving

Churches do this a lot based on them growing.

Someone shows up to a place starts a Bible study and years later it is a megachurch.

And what will happen is repeatedly, people will say this must have been of God because look at the signs.

And they'll say no, you must listen to our teacher and to our pastor because look at all that God has done you can't deny the signs.

Point to the buildings or to the number of baptisms are the people in the room.

They may have stories of people whose lives have been changed so they may have stories of miracles
But just because it looks like God is moving, it does not mean it is of God.

We must be wary and not fall into this trap
Because even today this is something that leaders can use to lead the church astray.
And when they're called out on their sinful behavior on their fall season we'll look at all that God has done. How can you criticize a man of God who did this?
That's what the false prophet does
And the spirit of the false prophet justifies its deception because of the greatness of the signs
So often there will be abusers.
There will be leaders hiding terrible darkness.
Wolves in shepherds clothing who are eating the sheep.
And they will appeal to their signs as to why you can't challenge them.
We cannot fall for signs and we cannot fall for wonders
It doesn't mean that we shouldn't celebrate things or that we always need to have a spirit of skepticism and doubt.
But it does mean that signs and wonders alone are not enough

Matthew 7 tells us that one day there were people standing before God who will say, didn't we do signs and wonders in your name and cast out demons and look at all of the stuff
And Jesus will say depart for me. I don't know you.

And the Holy Spirit has true power.
The signs and wonders of the Spirit are not empty.
They are not meant to impress people or draw a crowd.
The signs of the Spirit are meant to transform and redeem sinners.

Look at the primary miracles Jesus worked.
He continually came and healed people.

And the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to heal the sick.
Miracles that weren't meant to deceive, but to help the sick and needy.
To let the lame walk and to help the blind see.
Because the power of the Holy Spirit is meant to bring new life.
It is the transformative power of the gospel.

Every single miracle you see in the Bible is not just meant to show off.
It is not just God trying to get glory.
It is working to transform us.
The plagues in Egypt were to transform Israel from slaves to free.
Elijah called down fire to transform Israel from a nation of idolaters to true worshippers.
Manna fell from heaven not to feed hungry bellies but to transform souls to those who desire the daily bread.
Every miracle, every work of the Spirit is meant to transform us into the image of Christ.
The fruit of the Spirit is one of the great works of the Spirit.
And it transforms us.
But the false prophet just does things for its own glory.
It only works wonders for wonders sake.
It pleases the crowds who followed Jesus just because they wanted a show.

III. The false prophet uses force while the Holy Spirit invites us to worship (v. 15-18).

The false prophet does not just invite people to worship.
He forces them.
It begins with deception quietly in the shadows.
It moves and transfers to great big signs and wonders to attract
And then finally uses force and violence to worship

We see this in verse 15, **"that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain."**

The great image of the false prophet kills
Anyone who refuses to worship the beast and refuses to worship the
antichrist is slain.

It should remind us of the story in Daniel of those who would not bow to
the image of Nebuchadnezzar image are cast into the fire.

Here continues that same strategy

And it is not just the pressure of the sword and of death.

It is also greater pressure as the tighten the screw screws.

And it uses the economy and money, which all human beings are tempted
to worship

Verse 16, **"Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor,
both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,"**

Here is where we get the mark of the beast

In a moment, but I'll try to explain and unpack 666 in the mark of the beast
but for now I want us to see that it is a tool of force and oppression

It is something that the false prophet uses and forces upon people in order
to cause them to worship the beast

All people are brought, and all people are forced to be marked on the
hand in the forehead

And it is universal, the slave in the free the rich, and the poor, everyone
must bow and give in to the world's economy

And we see they are marked and branded like slaves

And marked in an imitation and rip off of the mark of the lamb, we've
already read about in Revelation

Verse 17, **"so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is,
the name of the beast or the number of its name."**

It shows us the force that is coming.

People must accept the beast

They must be branded with the name and the mark of the beast they must
worship him publicly, or they are going to suffer.

Worship the beast, or your business is gonna have to close.

Worship the beast, or you won't be able to go into the market and buy the latest nice things that you want.

Worship the beast, or you're gonna have to pay a lot more because you're not getting the discount.

The pressure to worship the beast does not just come on Sunday morning or in the temple or religious places. It comes everywhere.

And I think we see some of the same pressure today in an every age

The early church sought with the idolatry in Rome, where there was great pressure to go to sacrifice to idols to make sacrifices in the name of the emperor in order to buy and sell.

Engage in this idolatry, so you can claim the economic ladder

There has always, and there will always be pressure to give in to the world's economy and to give them to Satan's way of doing business so that we can succeed

The way of Jesus and the path of the lamb does not lead to material riches
Following Jesus is not a get rich, quick scheme

In fact, following Jesus is compared to picking up your cross, giving away all you have and following Him in suffering and death

And so continually even today, we will feel the pressure.

We will feel the force the world asking us to deny, asking us to worship just a little bit, asking us to hold on a little tighter to our things

Because there are those who would never wanna go and worship something other than Jesus, but as soon as you start threatening their money, then suddenly the way of the lamb doesn't sound so good.

Let's talk about the Mark of the beast number.

Because this is a one of the passages in one of the places that people lose their minds more than any other

And I don't think that we need to.

Because there is nowhere in scripture where anyone is accidentally getting the work of the beast.

The market of the beast is not something that a Christian can just accidentally get cause they didn't know any better.

You will often hear people in the best many decades there will be fear mongering or scare about. This is the Mark of the beast.

OK, the Mark of the beast isn't vaccines. It's not credit cards and microchips. It's not barcodes if you're following Jesus, it's not something that you need to be afraid or that you need to worry about.

I think one of the ways that the spirit of the false prophet works in our own age is that he is more than happy for people to get obsessed with the Mark of the beast.

That he is just as happy to have people spending all of their time thinking and reading every news story they can find to try and understand how this mark is going to come.

He's just as happy to have those people distracted from Jesus.

Verse 18, **"This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666."**

This calls for wisdom, and it is no surprise that many people deeply lack it. I'll try to briefly explain this a little bit.

The primary way that we understand this is that names can be turned into the numbers.

There was a process they would do this in Hebrew, where each consonant and each Hebrew letter represents a number.

So you can take the name of somebody translate to Hebrew and you can add up those numbers and then if they equal this number, that's the beast or the antichrist.

Now you can see right away some problems.

Because you can really make numbers do whatever you want.

Especially when you're taking names from one language to another language and they don't share all the same letters. And you can decide how much of someone's name you want to include. And this is why almost every single president in the modern era has had their name changed and said look it's the mark of the beast.

I am sure that I could take almost any of your names and with a little creative spelling I could also make your name equal 666.

Maybe that is what we will do on Wednesday night.

So I do not believe that this was given to us in order that we can identify ahead of time to the beast state.

I love the church father Irenaeus, who said that if God wanted us to know the name ahead of time, then he would've told us what it was.

But he did not.

But the main thing that we need to understand what we need to do is to recognize the way that the false prophet works in this age and the age to come.

We need to use our wisdom given to us by God instead of chasing our tails in fear.

The beast will force worship.

And it won't be weird or secret.

It is going to be very obvious.

Bow and worship the beast.

And the force of the false prophet is the antithesis of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit invites us to worship Jesus.

He does not force us against our will.

God does not twist our arms into worshipping Him.

He does not hold us at gun point.

We are never forced to worship Christ or die.

We are to carry our crosses not place people on them.

Unfortunately, at times in history, the church has forgotten this.

Like during the crusades, during colonization, or dark times of missionary activity.

And every time it has been demonic and forgotten what the Holy Spirit does.

He invites us to Jesus.

He reveals the truth.

He offers the transforming power of the goepl.

And we are invited to come.

Come, taste and see that God is good.

Come drink from the waters of living water and never thirst again.

Come and behold Jesus.

This is one of the reasons I am uncomfortable with altar calls or places in churches that try to twist arms and emotionally manipulate people.

The Holy Spirit just shows us Jesus and tells us to come.

When you behold Jesus.

When you see the wonder and glory of God.

When you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit,

We are invited to have more.

To find what our souls have always longed for.

Everyone is invited to come to Jesus.

There is a great banquet and invitations are going out to every sinner, the poor, all those who are far off, and anyone who would come.

Anyone can come to feast with Jesus.

No one will be forced to eat.

But the invitation is here.

Would you come?