***The Two Robbers at the Crucifixion

RV168-01***

We are studying "The Antichrist" in Revelation 13:1-10. This is segment number 11.

**Three Crosses**

While I was driving to Florida recently, I saw at one point, three life-size crucifixion crosses standing by the side of the highway. The crosses, obviously, we're portraying the scene on Golgotha Hill where Jesus Christ and two robbers were crucified. Probably at certain times of the year, around Easter, some special use is made of that display. But I began to wonder why God the Father had arranged to have three crosses on that hill that day. Why were two robbers also crucified, along with Jesus Christ? It would seem that, at this momentous event in human history, when the payment for the sins of all mankind would be made, that God the Father would put up only one cross – that of His Son, to focus all attention upon Him. However, since God is always organized in what He does, and since He teaches truths through symbols, I wondered what the lessons possibly were of three crosses on the hill at the death of Christ.

**The Crucifixion**

We find the crucifixion account in Matthew 27:33-44: "And when they had come (that is, the crucifixion party) to a place called Golgotha; which means place of a skull." You may visit this hill to this day, and as you stand overlooking the hill, it looks like a skull. The two eyes are clear, and you can see the place of the nose and the mouth. It is amazing. I was startled as I stood, looking at that hill, and realized how, to this very day, the topographical structure has retained the appearance of a skull, and you knew why they called it Golgotha.

"And they gave Him (Jesus) wine to drink, mingled with gall. (That was a sedative.) And after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink. And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots. And sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there. And they put up above His head the charge against Him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' At that time, two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right, and one on the left. And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' In the same way, the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, 'He saved others. He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel. Let him come down from the cross, and we shall believe in Him. He trusts in God. Let Him deliver Him now if He takes pleasure in Him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'' And the robbers also, who had been crucified with Him, were casting the same insults at Him.

Let's add to this an additional account in Luke 23:39-43: "And one of the criminals who was hanging there was hurling abuse at Him saying, 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.' But the other answered, and rebuking him, said, 'Do you not even fear God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation; and we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds. But this Man has done nothing wrong.' And he was saying, 'Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.' And He said to him, 'Truly, I say to you: today, you shall be with Me in paradise."

You will observe that both robbers were unsaved. So, initially, as they hung on the cross next to Jesus, they joined in with the Jewish leaders in ridiculing, mocking, and insulting the Lord Jesus. What this reflected in these two robbers was the natural condition of spiritual blindness, which is always accompanied with strong human viewpoint, religious beliefs. The thieves were like people in general. People by nature are blind to spiritual things, but they don't know they're blind. And because they don't know that, they confidently believe that they can make decisions about spiritual things. They can make decisions about God; about what God thinks; about right and wrong; and, about how God will deal with them. This is why Proverbs 14:12 observes that there is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

The human viewpoint views of people on religious matters lead only to eternal death. This is because Satan controls those who are not Christians. He controls the lost, and furthermore, he keeps them blinded to the gospel of the grace of God, which would save them, and which would release them from Satan's delusions.

In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, we have something told us which is important for you to remember if you are interested in being a witness of Jesus Christ. If you are interested in talking about salvation to people, you better know what it is that you're up against. You're up against a stone blank wall that is totally incapable of perceiving spiritual truths. In 2 Corinthians 4:3, Paul said, "Even if our gospel is veiled, it is vital to those who are perishing." He is talking about the gospel of the grace of God – being saved by receiving the present of eternal life from God, by simply accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior, and trusting in Him, with His death on the cross, to have covered your sins.

Verse 4: "In whose case, the God of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel, of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." He has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. There is no sophisticated unbeliever on the face of the earth who believes that. Unbelievers (and the more educated, and the more cultured, and the more refined, and the more perceptive they are), think they know the score. The Word of God says that they don't have the foggiest notion of what it's all about when it comes to dealing with a Holy God. They don't understand the gospel, and they cannot grasp it. They just don't see their need.

So, here on Golgotha's hill, we have both of these thieves who are standing at the very threshold of death, and they don't see the eternal doom of the lake of fire which is imminently before them. Worse than that, they do not see the way of escape to be found in Jesus Christ, who is hanging on the cross next to them. That is the natural condition of the human race. That is the natural condition of the human race right up to the point of death. They may fear what is out there. They may begin to have second thoughts about what they're going to face, but they have no capacity for knowing what to do.

The robbers took comfort only in one fact – the same thing unbelievers take comfort in today, and that is that they shared the majority view about Jesus Christ. So, they knew that they were right in their opinions about Him. They rejected Him as a fraud, just as the leaders of Israel did.

However, as we have read, suddenly something happens. One of the belligerent robbers suddenly has his spiritual blindness removed, and he trusts Jesus Christ to save him. God, put up three crosses because, in the very process of providing the covering for the sins of mankind, He had a tremendous message of grace to deliver. To perceptive minds, those three crosses do not suddenly become extraneous. The two crosses of the robbers do no suddenly become extraneous to the scene, but they become extremely important at the heart of what God is saying on that hill.

What happened was that the ministry of God the Holy Spirit came in to work upon one of these robbers. It is the ministry of God the Holy Spirit in which he feels but the scale from the spiritual eyes of a human being, and suddenly, he sees spiritual things as they really are.

In Romans 3:10-12, we read, "As it is written (that is Old Testament Scripture), 'There is none righteous. No, not one.'" There is not a person on the face of the earth that is sinless. There is no one who understands. There's not a person in his lost condition who understands a Fig Newton about spiritual things – zilch, nothing. But they think they know it all. There is none who seeks God. There is no person in his lost condition who worries about facing a holy, righteous God. They don't seek Him. All have turned aside. Together they have become useless. There's no who does good. There's not even one." Yet, an organization like the Roman Catholic Church tells you that you may do good to prove yourself worthy of receiving justification. But the Bible says, "You can't do any good." When you're an unsaved person, everything you have is contaminated by your sin nature, and even your good works are considered evil by God. So, the more good works you do as an unbeliever, the greater will be your punishment in hell someday, because that is an evil as well.

You're an impossible no-win situation. The Mormons are forever telling their people, "God the Father, and one of His multiplied wives in heaven, reproduced you as a spirit child through their sexual relations. And now God, who is a human being like ourselves, with a physical body, has given you a physical body for you to enter here on this earth to prove yourself worthy. So Mormons knock themselves out being moral people and doing good things, but it's only by human standards. God says, "Everything they do is filthy rags," to use God's words. Their works are filthy rags in God's sight, because the sin nature dirties up everything you can do that we consider good: "There is no one who does good. There is not even one.

With that condition, a human being is in a desperate situation. He cannot do anything good. He does not understand how to get to God. Worst of all, he doesn't even know how bad off he is. That was both thieves, originally, on the cross. But now something has happened to one. He suddenly, for some reason, realizes the desperate strait that he's in. He knows what's going to happen. He knows that they'll either let him hang three or four days on that cross, and finally, excruciatingly and painfully slowly die, or to speed things up, he knows they're going to come, and they're going to break both of his legs, so that they create a condition of shock, and the trauma kills him. So, he knows he's going out, and he knows that the Jews don't like dead bodies hanging on the cross over the Sabbath day. So, he knows that they're going to finish him off that day. Time is short. Most people go out of this world who are unbelievers, don't have any warning, and don't have enough time to reconsider, let alone the capacity to do anything about it. But here God comes in.

Here is one of the lessons of the three crosses. John 16:8-11 tell us the only thing that God the Holy Spirit will ever do for an unbeliever. This is the one thing that God does for an unbeliever – nothing else: "And He (God the Holy Spirit), when He comes (which He did on the day of Pentecost) will convict the world" (the unsaved world – the unbelievers) of three things: concerning sin; righteousness; and, judgment. Three things can happen to the lost unbeliever who is under the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

This is the things you should be praying for when you want to witness to people, you want to lead them to the Lord. These three things are what you should ask God the Holy Spirit to move through, and to execute. Until He does that, you're talking to a blank brick wall. You will get nowhere. But once he does this, spiritual eyes suddenly flutter open, and the unseen see their true status before a holy God, and now their ears are attuned to the gospel message that you're ready to give them.

**Sin**

The first thing is concerning sin: "Because they did not believe in Me." God the Holy Spirit convicts a lost person of his sinfulness (or his moral guilt), which is going to result in the penalty of eternal death in hell.

**Righteousness**

Concerning righteousness, verse 10 said, "Because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me." While Lord Jesus Christ was on this earth, He was the total example of absolute righteousness. He was the one perfect human being that ever walked the face of the earth. He was, in every respect, the very epitome of Godliness. He reflected all the qualities of righteousness. So, a lost person's lack of absolute righteousness must be brought to him, because he has to understand that if he's not as good as Jesus Christ with absolute righteousness, he can't go to heaven. You have to have the absolute righteousness of God (that's perfection) to go to heaven. When a person realizes that, then he leans back, and he throws up his hands, and he no longer tries the nonsense road of his good works, and his rituals, and his religious activity. He realizes now he's in a pit that he cannot get out of.

**Judgment**

The third thing the Holy Spirit hits us with as unbelievers is concerning judgment: "Because the ruler of this world has been judged." He brings the realization to the lost person that Satan, the god of this world, has been defeated with the battle at the cross, and that God has now doomed all who follows Satan, to join him in the lake of fire. So, suddenly, a person realizes that he's under the judgment of God that has been passed on Satan and all those who follow him. He needs to realize now that any religion won't do. Any religion will not do. Only through Jesus Christ will people enter heaven.

So, Jesus told us that the gate into eternal life is small, and the pathway to heaven is narrow, and only a few people of the human race will find it. On the cross on Golgotha Hill, only one of the two robbers found it. That's one of the lessons that's being declared there – that not everyone is going to make it. As a matter of fact, most of the human race has created its own religious approach, because of their spiritual blinders, and they are not going to be in heaven.

The convicting work of the Holy Spirit, then, drives the lost sinner to Jesus Christ for salvation to be received as a grace gift. When the Holy Spirit gets through convicting a person on sin, righteousness, and judgment, that individual finally sees there is no chance for him on his own. It has to be something that God has done.

So, if you've been trusting in something on your own, or if you've been thinking you're good enough, like the next person, you better forget it. You're going to have all of eternity in hell to regret that viewpoint. That is blindness. The truth is that salvation is in Christ alone, and it can only be received as a gift.

Romans 5:20-21, says, "And the Law (the Mosaic Law, with its moral code) which reflected the absolute righteousness of God." The law came in that the transgression might increase. But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. God said that He wrote the Law. He gave us something like the Ten Commandments, and he said, "Look at that. That's the way you should be. It's a mirror to take a look at yourself. You're covered with the dirt of sin." But Paul says, "The dirtier you were, the greater was the grace of God that came in to wash you up. That as sin reigned in death (when sin controlled, it brought death), so grace (when it controls in the life of the believer) might reign through righteousness to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." That grace would bring you eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now, up to this point in his life, the repentant thief had had no fear of God, and had no interest in Jesus Christ for salvation. Only the Holy Spirit could break through that blindness and change that insane attitude in the repentant thief. So, the three crosses stressed that only the Holy Spirit can cause a lost sinner to have faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. It is not your appeals. It is not the preacher's clever stories. It is not the preacher who is weeping in the pulpit to get you emotionally stirred up. I have heard of some preachers, who in their notes, write emotional guidelines for themselves: "Weep here; smile here; laugh here; look sad here; let you voice break here; or, whatever it is." It's right in the notes, so that you don't miss it. All of that fakery is not going to make it.

There were two thieves on the cross. Why should one have suddenly become alerted to his condition, and looked next to him, and said, "Here's the answer," while the other kept cursing and reviling the answer next to him? The answer is that God the Holy Spirit came through. That's one of the lessons. Why three crosses were there to – to show us that nobody responds unless God first opens your eyes. The believing robber now sees the justice of God in punishing him with death for his evil deeds and moral guilt. The Holy Spirit enlightenment has brought a rational fear of facing a holy God with unforgiven sins.

Luke 23:40: "The other answered in rebuking him (the repentant thief said), 'Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?'" Now, suddenly, the repentant thief has a fear of God, and he's wondering why the other thief does not fear God. Well, the answer is that the other thief hasn't been touched by God the Holy Spirit.

So, the repentant thief suddenly realizes that Jesus Christ really was sinless, and that he did not deserve death by crucifixion. Verse 41: "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." He realizes that this is the sinless Man, and that indeed all of His claims to being the Son of God have been justified. In a moment, in an instant, this man suddenly sees that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God, dying to atone for his sin guilt – for the sin guilt of this repentant thief and all mankind. And all of a sudden, he believes that claim that Jesus makes, which the religions of the world, and most of humanity, reject, which Jesus enunciated in John 14:6, when he said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Me."

Do you understand what that verse is saying? Nobody gets into heaven except by trusting in Jesus Christ. The Muslims are out. The Mormons are out. The Catholics are out. The Buddhists are out. The New Agers are out. All the mass of humanity is out because they reject Jesus Christ. And they cannot know about Him because they reject the Bible – the only source of information about Him. If you don't go from the Bible, then you're on your own in making up what you believe goes on.

While I was working away at printing up and addressing our advertising for Berean Academy, I had the TV on and I happened to turn to a station, and it was Oprah Winfrey. She had a show in progress that I had heard was coming, about a mother who had four or five lesbian daughters, and the mother was there. When Oprah spoke to the mother, this mother was trying to hold back the tears, expressing her attitude of how she feels. You could look at these women. Two of them were obviously playing the male role in the homosexual relationship of the lesbians. You had to look at them twice to see that they were not men.

This discussion went on about this wonderful lifestyle: how you'll never want anything else once you've tried it; how this is the way that was natural for them; and, how this is the way they should be. Finally, one lady in the audience got up and said, "I used to be that. I became a Christian, and I don't practice that lifestyle anymore. You see, my will decided to practice this perversion. And my will decided, even though this may still be attractive to me, not to do this thing, because it's sinful." Another man got up and said, "This is what the Bible says: God condemns homosexuality as an evil sin." He could have added that God never says something is sin over which you do not have volitional control. It is not something you're born with. It might be attractive, like adultery, but that does not justify your doing it. Your volitional act says, "No, I don't do that. It violates the rules of God.

Apparently somebody in the back of a room, that was off camera, stood up with a Bible. And Oprah looked over there and said, "Oh, don't quote the Bible now." And there it was. The whole program was put into perspective. Here are these human beings talking, and arguing, and discussing back and forth on this subject, and trying to come to an arrival of truth. Then when somebody had the audacity to hold up a Bible, and say, "Well, here's what God says about this, and He makes the ground rules," that is the one thing that she did not want to inject in that program. I notice that Donahue does the same thing. If you want to give him a catatonic fit, just walk in with a Bible. Don't say anything. Just sit on the front row of his program and open it. I've been thinking about doing that – sitting on the front row with a big Bible pulpit Bible. I would opened it up and sit there, and just stare at him. Boy, he would get uneasy, and that microphone would stay away from you.

Well, what do we know about God? We know what the Word of God says. It says that Jesus Christ is the only way into eternal life. But you don't know that until God makes that clear. So, suddenly, this thief realizes that Jesus is all he claimed to be. He is the sinless Lamb of God. He is dying, at that very moment, right along with Him, to cover his.

So, the believing thief expresses his faith in the Lord Jesus by asking Him to take him into His kingdom. In Luke 23:42, he said, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." In verse 43, Jesus responded, "Truly, I say to you: today you shall be with Me in paradise." Jesus assured him that he will be saved – that after their deaths later that day, he will join Jesus in the Paradise section of Hades. Hades, at that time, had two main compartments. One compartment was called Abraham's bosom by the Jews, and it was called Paradise by the gentiles. That's where all saved people went. The other section was called Torments, where unbelievers went. Then it had a special compartment called Tartarus, where the angels of Genesis 6, who had intermarried with women were kept in special darkness and chains. But that's another story.

Jesus was saying, "You're going to be with Me today in the Paradise section of Hades. This man immediately knew that all was well with his soul.

Here is something the three crosses tell us. This demonstrates that salvation is a great gift from God, requiring no human good works, but only faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Obviously, if this man was going to be saved, he could not have been saved by good works. He wasn't in any position to do any good works. He didn't have time for good works. Yet, here is a reason for the three crosses. This man, who had led such a vile, despicable life, on the very threshold of death, has his destiny changed from hell to heaven? He couldn't have done it by good works. It had to be on some other basis.

Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace (by a kindness of God) you have been saved through faith. And that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God. That salvation is a present from God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." Now, that's very clear. You can't be saved by your efforts, but only by the efforts of Jesus Christ. So, this shows that a vile, sinful life can yet experience new birth spiritually at the point of death, by God's grace, and go to heaven.

Furthermore, salvation is clearly an instantaneous act of God the Holy Spirit. That's what is described in John 3 as a new birth – being born-again. People don't like this term being "born again" because it separates human beings. People know that they're not born-again.

In John 3:7, Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Do not marvel that I say to you, 'You must be born again.'" You have to be born again spiritually by the Holy Spirit. You have to be regenerated.

This furthermore proves that water baptism, like any other human work, is not required for salvation. In fact, you can't add water baptism, like: "Just in case, I'm going to cover all bases." If you add water baptism, and you have any confidence or trust in that for getting you into heaven, it will keep you out, Romans 11:6 says, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace."

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "I'll save you, but only as a grace gift. It's the only way I'll save you." God says, "If you tell me, 'No, I won't take it as a gift, then I can't give it to you. If you try to work for it, you're out. If you add your water baptism, you're doomed yourself to the lake of fire.

So, the three crosses proclaim that salvation is not based on proving oneself worthy for eternal life in heaven, but of accepting instead the worthiness of Jesus Christ, which God alone accepts for our salvation.

Here's how Paul says it in Titus 3:4-7: "But when the kindness of God our Savior, and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness (our human good), but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (by the washing work of the God the Holy Spirit), whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified." And remember that the word "justified" means that now you stand in God's sight in possession of absolute righteousness. Therefore, you are as good as Jesus Christ: "That being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (a certain hope)." The salvation the God gives us as a gift is to those who do nothing more than trust in Jesus Christ to save them.

That salvation, once you have it, because it has been entirely a work of God, is now irreversible, and you cannot lose it again. It's important that people understand that. In John 10:27-28, Jesus, put it this way: "My sheep hear My voice. (Those who are born again will hear My voice.) I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life. They shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." That means that you can never be lost again.

On the other side of Jesus is the thief who exercised negative volition. This unrepentant thief is still in Hades, while the believing thief is securely in heaven. The unrepentant thief was left by God in his spiritual blindness (known only to God as to why), and he was not called into eternal life. The scales were not removed. This is the condition of the majority of the human race. Matthew 7:13-14 tell us that: "Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it." This is speaking of going to hell: "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it." This is speaking about going to heaven.

The believing thief represents the status of the minority of the human race who find salvation in Jesus Christ by the illuminating work of God the Holy Spirit. Three crosses here proclaim the doctrine of divine election for salvation. No human priestly agency has the authority to dispense salvation to the lost, as the Roman Catholic Church claims, for example. It is a direct deal between God and a sinner, with only Jesus Christ acting as the middle man. It is a matter of whether you are willing to accept Christ as your Savior on the basis of His death, which covered all your sins. Sin is no longer the issue between any human being and God. The issue is believing or not believing.

1 Timothy 2:5 clarifies that: "For there is one God, and one mediator also, between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." No priest and no preacher stands between you and God. Right now, where you sit, if you are out of the family of God, you have only to (silently, in your heart) tell God that you accept His Son as your Savior, and the deal is closed. Nobody else is involved. Nobody else can be involved.

On Golgotha, Jesus Christ did it all for us because that's the only way the justice of God could be satisfied toward sin.

1 John 2:2: "And He (Jesus Christ Himself) is the propitiation for our sins." The word "propitiation" means "satisfaction" of the justice of God: "And not for ours only not (not only for those of us who believe and are born-again), but also for those of the whole world." This is even for the unbeliever. Can you believe it? This is even for the unbeliever who will sit in hell while his sins have already been covered by Jesus Christ, because he wouldn't take the present?

It is amazing. It's simple, but it's amazing, how people will not believe God. And we know when we believe or we don't believe.

I told you about the day I was running chapel here in this very room, and I had all the kindergarten kids sitting on the front row. I wanted to teach them about believing God, and I pulled out a brand new beautiful dollar bill and said, "I'll give this to any kindergarten child who will walk up and take it. Do you believe I would do that?" And they all sat there, and none of them believed me. And, of course, all the smart kids were raising their hands all over the place, trying to get my attention: "I'll come." From first grade on up, they get smart. I said to the kindergarten kids, "No? Nobody wants to come?" And not a one of them would believe me. "I said, "I'll give this dollar bill to anybody who will come and take it. I'll give it to you, and you don't have to earn it or work for it. It's a present." And one little guy moved up, and he started to walk, and I said, "Do you think I'll give you this dollar bill?" And he sat back down. His belief slithered away from him.

Finally, one little guy had been eyeing me and analyzing me, put his shoulders back, and he walked up. And the little sucker got my dollar bill. He believed, and he walked back. And all the kids on the front row were looking at him, disappointed forever, because that was the last dollar I ever had, and they cannot get another one. That was their last opportunity. They got the message, and they understood what it meant to believe.

Some people try to say, "Well, what does it mean to believe? That's so complicated." No, it's not. You know whether you believe that Christ covered your sins. If you don't want to trust in that; you don't want to believe that; and, you don't want to let Him transform you into a new creature, that is your volitional choice.

So, at the moment of paying for the penalty of the sins of mankind, God the Father used three crosses on Golgotha to proclaim His free grace salvation. Peter spoke about that in 1 Peter 2:21-25: "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth. And while being reviled, He did not revile in return. While suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. For by His wounds, you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep. But now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls."

**The Antichrist**

The antichrist of the tribulation is seeking to imitate Jesus Christ as God, and to present himself as the Savior of mankind. We have found that he will be an arrogant braggart, and a liar who will be deceiving the whole world about his true nature and his intentions. The authority of the antichrist will be the result of superhuman powers which he receives from Satan. The antichrist will therefore be worshiped as God, and he will possess seemingly invincible military power, so that gradually he conquers the whole world. The antichrist, in his hatred of God, will bless Him with great vileness. The climax of the power of the antichrist is going to come during the last three-and-a-half years of the tribulation, which the Bible calls the great tribulation. The antichrist will be the last of the false Christs that Jesus warned were going to come. He will be the last false Christ.

**Charismatics**

In Matthew 24:24, the Lord wanted to alert us to the fact that false claims to Christhood will be coming. Jesus said, "For false Christ and false prophets will arise, and they will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. These false Christs are going to have great miraculous capacity. They're going to be able to work miracles. Take a look where the charismatic yo-yos go in view of this, who are always chasing around looking for miracles; who are telling people that God wants them to be prosperous; and, who are telling people that if they send money to them, God will prosper them and return to them multiplied finances. They will have signs and wonders. Yes, in the charismatic churches, you will find signs and wonders taking place. And the devil and his minions, the demons, run through that congregation having a ball, while these poor, pathetic people actually believe that God is working among them, because they are ignorant of doctrine.

In Revelation, 13:6, we read that the antichrist will open his mouth in blasphemies against God. The open-mouth policy here of the antichrist indicates that he will capitalize on his ability with words. We showed you last time that the Bible tells us that this man will be a man capable of using the kind of words that create mental images and create emotional reactions. The antichrist will be the great world communicator, and he will use the communication media to project his message. What he will bring is blasphemies. The mouth of the antichrist will pour out a steady diatribe against God. God as the Creator, and God as sovereign ruler of the universe, cannot be touched by the antichrist. So, all he will do will be expressing his rage against God. He will insult God; he will ridicule God; and, He will treat God with contempt. This is not going to be in mere private conversations. This will be on nightly news television as he speaks to all the world. Remember that we're talking about the great tribulation; we're talking about halfway through the seven years; and, we're talking about when he is the head of a world government. So, he is everything now.

The antichrist will then, in effect, be challenging God to try to interfere with his success as world ruler, and to stop him. The antichrist, like Pilate, is able to exercise his authority only by God's permission. In John 19:10-11, when Pilate threatened Jesus with his authority, Jesus said, "You don't have any authority except that which has been given to you," meaning: "You wouldn't even be governor here if My Heavenly Father didn't permit it. The blasphemy of God is going to express antichrist unbelief toward God and his own belief in his own deity.

This is indicated to us by the apostle Paul in one place in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. Paul says, "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first (that is, the tribulation will not come until the apostasy comes first), and the man of lawlessness (the antichrist) is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God."

It does cause goosebumps to break out on the back of my neck when I listen to Mormon leaders telling their people that they are destined to become gods. This is the same lies Satan has given all the centuries, from the time of Eve on down: "You are going to become gods if you will prove yourself worthy." And he, the antichrist, is going to be acting in the same tradition as previous Roman emperors. Since he will be the last of the Roman emperors, he is going to act in the tradition of the Roman emperors who claim for themselves deity.

**The Blasphemy of the Antichrist**

Satan hates God. So, he moves his man, the antichrist, to express the grossest blasphemy against God. Believers at that time will really cringe when they hear the foul language that is directed to God, and the vileness that will be spewed out against the living God. The antichrist will be given the all-time great vocabulary for blasphemy; for name-calling; and, for insulting God. He will mock God. He will do it visually.

When people want to blaspheme, and when people want to ridicule, they have visual signs that they use to express their contempt. He will do it visually on TV, and it will be in really the same way that is done to biblical Christians today, whom Satan hates, because they are the Lord's people.

One purpose of the antichrist's blasphemies is, of course, going to be to intimidate any on earth who are having second thoughts about him, in order to prevent their defections from God.

Verse 6 tells us that he goes on in a very specific way with his blasphemy. There are three eternally important, precious objects to the living God that receive the brunt of his blasphemy. We shall look at those next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1991

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