

Counterfeit

The Many Faces of Evil – Part V

Revelation 13:3-4

Introduction

In one of my recent trips . . . to Chick-fil-A – you thought I was going to say to a mission field, right?! These trips to Chick-fil-A are part of a well-balanced life – I actually go there with the added incentive of a free newspaper, which anyone can read while they eat their healthy mix of nuggets with honey barbecue sauce, sweet tea, and, if they have a little extra money, one of their signature brownies with chocolate icing on top. In my opinion, it is all part of spiritual growth.

With this said, one article from the *USA Today* newspaper a few weeks ago caught my attention. The headline read, “Bogus Money Goes Mainstream”. The article revealed ways that the current economic downturn has given new meaning to word, “photocopying”.

Arrests for making counterfeit money have hit a five-year high. People are now evidently trying to pass off fake bills to pay everyday expenses. If you can imagine, counterfeiters handed off 64.4 million fake dollars in 2008.

The article read, “Counterfeiters have taken advantage of technological advances in scanners and printers.”

Christmas is usually the worst time of year, one federal agent reported, saying, “The cashiers are overwhelmed.”

The article reported that this problem is now way beyond the Christmas season. One secret service agent said in an interview that this problem is no longer the actions of the criminal element in society, like drug dealers and gangsters; this is now a mainstream problem – this is your neighbor next door.

People have been caught trying to use counterfeit 20 dollar bills to buy pizza and gasoline for their cars.

One 15-year-old student in Milford, Michigan, photographed currency on a scanner copier and tried to pass it off at his high school cafeteria.

In one town in Georgia, earlier this month, local banks found counterfeit 20 and 100 dollar bills from

respectable merchants. Authorities from this same town had already recently arrested one man, catching him in the act as he printed bills from a color scanner on his kitchen table.

One lawman said, “This is probably due to the economy . . . I’ve got a feeling there’s a lot more out there.”ⁱ

Imagine the implications of this: the character of our citizens can be bought off by a downward economy. Difficult times can cause ordinary, for the most part law-abiding citizens to photocopy a 20 dollar bill and risk everything to pass it off.

When my three brothers and I were growing up and someone was in the news for stealing, my father used to say to us that the amount stolen was too little to sell oneself out for – whether it was a hundred dollars or a million dollars. He would usually say, “My character is worth more than a hundred dollars.”

From this perspective, imagine someone’s character being worth less than a pizza, or a tank of gas, or lunch from the school cafeteria – or, I might add, a couple thousand dollars on a dishonest tax return.

If troubled times can lead people to sell their conscience and create some counterfeit money, there is little wonder in my mind that the world will one day, during the darkest days of the Tribulation, follow a counterfeit Messiah. They will literally sell their souls to a counterfeit king.

We have been introduced to the antichrist already in Revelation chapter 13.

In the first two verses of this chapter and in Daniel’s prophecy, we have learned that the antichrist will head up a revived Roman Empire. This empire will have ten European kingdoms – matching the vision of Daniel’s image with ten toes, signifying this ten kingdom coalition which forms a one-world government.

We have also learned that the antichrist will rise to power as a fairly insignificant European leader, which Daniel calls a little king that rises among them (Daniel 7:8). In other words, he is a king among the European leaders, and he will begin his rise to power as an unimpressive, inauspicious man.

Daniel also informs us that the antichrist will eventually rise to take the throne as the world's final Caesar.

The antichrist will eventually force everyone to take his mark or die. This mark of the beast is described later in Revelation chapter 13, as we will study closely in a later session.

The antichrist is the ultimate counterfeiter. Everything God has done, Satan has tried to duplicate or counterfeit. The antichrist will be the devil's greatest achievement in the history of his counterfeit agenda.

Going through scripture and comparing the life and ministry of Jesus Christ with the efforts of Satan to counterfeit Him, reveals uncanny results. Let me give some comparisons; in fact, nineteen of them in this introduction.

By the way, this entire manuscript is available to read or print for free online later each week on colonial.org by selecting "media".

Jesus Christ	The Antichrist
Performs miracles, signs, wonders	Performs miracles, signs, wonders
Appears in the millennial temple	Appears in the tribulation temple
Is God incarnate	Claims to be God incarnate
The Lion from Judah	Has a mouth like a lion
Makes peace covenant with Israel	Makes peace covenant with Israel
Inspires worship of God the Father	Inspires worship of Satan

1. Jesus Christ performs miracles, signs, and wonders throughout the gospels; Paul writes to the Thessalonians that the antichrist will come in accordance with the activity of Satan, "with all power and signs and false wonders" (II Thessalonians 2:9).
2. Jesus Christ will appear in the millennial temple; the antichrist will make his appearance in the tribulation temple – the apostle Paul describes him taking his seat in the temple, declaring himself worthy of worship (II Thessalonians 2:4).
3. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God, that is, God in the flesh; the antichrist will claim to be the incarnation of God (II Thessalonians 2:4).

4. Jesus Christ is the Lion from the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5 reiterates this lineage); the antichrist will have a mouth like a lion (Revelation 13:2).
5. Christ will make a peace covenant with Israel that will be enjoyed throughout the millennial (Ezekiel 37); the antichrist will begin his claim as Messiah by offering Israel a peace covenant as well (Daniel 9:27).
6. Christ motivates and causes worship for the one true God; the antichrist will actually encourage worship of the false god, Satan.

Jesus Christ	The Antichrist
Followers are sealed on forehead	Followers are sealed on forehead/hand
Worthy name	Blasphemous names
Married to a virtuous bride	Married to a harlot
Crowned with many crowns	Crowned with 10 crowns
The King of Kings	Claims to be King
Sits on a throne	Sits on a throne
Rides a white horse	Rides a white horse

7. Christ's followers during the tribulation will be marked and sealed as His (Revelation 7:4); the antichrist will seal his followers on their forehead or right hand (Revelation 13:16-18).
8. Christ has a worthy name (Revelation 19:16); the antichrist uses blasphemous names.
9. Christ is married to a virtuous bride; the antichrist is betrothed to a vile harlot (Revelation 17:3-5).
10. Christ is crowned with many crowns; the antichrist is crowned with ten crowns (Revelation 13:1).
11. Jesus Christ is the King of Kings; the antichrist is called a king (Daniel 11:36).
12. Christ sits on a throne; the antichrist will sit on a throne (Revelation 16:10).
13. Christ will ride a white horse when He comes (Revelation 19:11); the antichrist rides on a white horse (Revelation 6:2).

Jesus Christ	The Antichrist
Has an army	Has an army
Violently died	Violently died
Resurrected	Resurrected
Comes again	Comes again
1,000 year reign	3 ½ year reign
Holy Trinity: Father, Son, Spirit	Unholy Trinity: Satan, Antichrist, Prophet

14. Christ has an army, as does the antichrist (Revelation 19:19).
15. Christ died a violent death; the antichrist will die a violent death (Revelation 13:3).
16. Christ is resurrected; the antichrist is resurrected (as we will see in a moment).
17. Christ comes again to reign; the antichrist will come back to reign (Revelation 13:3).
18. Jesus Christ reigns from Jerusalem for a thousand years during the millennial kingdom; the antichrist will reign for three and a half years in his worldwide kingdom (Revelation 13:5-8).
19. Christ is a part of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; we will discover in Revelation an unholy trinity of Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet.ⁱⁱ

In every way possible, Satan will attempt to counterfeit the true Messiah.

J. Dwight Pentecost, one of my former seminary professors, summarized it well when he wrote, “Satan is seeking to give the world a ruler *in place of* Christ who will also be *in opposition to* Christ so that he can rule over the world *instead of* Christ.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The Counterfeiter’s Deception

What is it that causes such profound deception by this counterfeit Messiah? There are primarily two things.

1. First, the antichrist’s management of peaceful reconciliation.

We saw the antichrist fulfill the symbolism of the white horseman who rides forward and offers Israel peace in their land. Palm branches will be waving at the sight of this wonder-worker who brokers what no other world leader has been able to accomplish.

However, this is just a warm-up. Not only will his management of peaceful reconciliation be impressive, but a second deception will cement the antichrist’s rise to world power.

2. Secondly, the antichrist’s miracle of physical resurrection.

The world’s wonder of the antichrist will turn to worship. Their excitement over him will turn into the exaltation of him as their crowned Messiah.

Let us take a closer look at Revelation 13:3.

I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast;

Remember that the title “beast” refers to both the antichrist and the coalition of the revived Roman Empire. Because of this fact, there are some who believe the resurrection spoken of in this verse is not referring to the antichrist, but to the resurrection of his kingdom – the revived Roman Empire.

The major problem with this view is that the Greek language uses the personal pronoun for this wounding and dying event, which then limits this to one of the kings – not the entire kingdom.^{iv}

If we look further in this chapter at the last part of verse 12, we find that John writes,

. . . the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.

Again this is a personal event – referring to one of the kings, and specifically, the first beast. The first beast introduced to us in chapter 13 is the antichrist. Evidently, at some point in his rise to power the antichrist is assassinated.

The question obviously comes up, “Was the antichrist really dead?”

Continue to verse 14 and look at the latter part in which the false prophet orders the world . . .

. . . to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

At some point in his rise to power, the antichrist is assassinated by a wound to the head. He is literally killed and literally brought back to life.

Is it certain the antichrist really died? Some believe he fakes it; it is one of his lying wonders.

I, along with other Bible teachers, believe the antichrist is actually physically dead. One of the strongest reasons I believe this is another verse of scripture. In verse 3 of Revelation 13, we read,

I saw one . . . as if it had been slain . . .

In other words, he was literally slaughtered.

Turn back to Revelation chapter 5, where we discover the English translation of the exact same Greek phrase being used of Jesus Christ. Notice verse 6, where we see the Lamb of God standing before the throne of God the Father. John writes that he saw,

... a Lamb standing, as if slain ...

By this, John does not mean that Jesus was not really slain, but that He bore the marks of having been slain. This implies that the antichrist will also wear the marks of the failed assassination attempt on his life as a sign of his invincibility. This is, as well, one more way he can masquerade as the Messiah.

Thus the antichrist's slaughter is as real as the Lamb's slaughter.^v

The antichrist is not faking death – he is really dead.

You might say, “Now wait a second! If you're saying what I think you're saying, this means the antichrist has to be literally resurrected from the dead. Do you believe Satan can resurrect someone from the dead?”

This is a great question.

Let me ask and answer a lesser question first. Can Satan perform miracles?

We know from scripture that Satan has been given delegated, limited power.

Do you remember the way, with God's permission, Satan was allowed to control the winds of nature to create a tornado that collapsed the home where Job's children were feasting? He was allowed to influence the mind of warriors who came and killed Job's servants. With further permission from God, Satan was able to exercise his power by sending diseases to Job's body, covering him with boils and sores.

This is significant, delegated, God-appointed and God-allowed power.

We saw the same thing earlier in Exodus when Pharaoh's magicians were able to copy several of the miracles of God through Moses. This included turning their own rods into serpents, just as Moses' rod was transformed into a serpent in Exodus 7:12. They were also able to turn water into blood in verse 22 of the same chapter, which only further hardened the heart of Pharaoh against the God of Moses – which was God's purpose.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ informs us that false teachers will eventually stand before the

Lord as unbelievers who were able to counterfeit true spiritual ministry, even in the name of Jesus Christ. They will perform real miracles of healing, but at the same time are not members of God's family. They are actually empowered by Satan himself because Jesus will say to them on the day of judgment (Matthew 7:22-23),

... “I never knew you ...”

In the same way Jesus Christ and His apostles raised people from the dead, Satan will be allowed the ability to raise the antichrist from the dead. This will counterfeit the very foundation of the Christian faith – the resurrection of the Messiah.

This helps us understand how the world will at the time consolidate not just their wonder over this man, but their worship of this man. He who was dead has come back to life.

We know that it is the empowerment of Satan, allowed by God, to perform this miracle in order to deceive the world – as John wrote earlier, “to lead the whole world astray” (Revelation 12:9).

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians that,
... God will send ... delusion, that [the world] should believe the lie (II Thessalonians 2:11)

I believe this resurrection of the antichrist is a major part of Paul's words being explained and fulfilled. God will allow Satan to perform this miracle and the world will fall at the antichrist's feet.

In my research, I uncovered the popular belief during the 1950s that John F. Kennedy was the antichrist. Runaway imaginations led to many misguided speeches and even sermons and articles.

Kennedy was, of course, the first President elected who was not Protestant, but Roman Catholic. This made our country, which was vastly Protestant at the time, somewhat suspicious of this man who was loyal to Rome. At the Democratic Convention in 1956, he received 666 votes. This really got the imagination going for some. He was elected President and then, was shot in the head – a fatal wound to the head – which is the way the Bible describes the death of the antichrist. There were some who believed that as President Kennedy lay in state in the rotunda of the Capitol, he would come out of his casket and assert himself as the ruler of the world. This, of course, never happened.^{vi}

I have tried to imagine this scene from the information John, Daniel, and Paul provide for us. Revelation 13 confirms the message.

The world is now grieving over the loss of its greatest peace negotiator – a brilliant genius of a man who had led his European country to national prominence.

This man's policies were being copied and his advice on everything was being requested. Only recently, he had helped solidify a European coalition, taking the reins of three countries whose leaders mysteriously died, or disappeared. He masterfully strengthened the coalition as he took over and the other kings granted him the highest rank among them.

His skill at leadership and diplomacy was breathtaking and reassuring. In a world that was going mad with plagues, earthquakes, disease and death, this leader's hand seemed to calm everything it touched.

However, an assassin had gotten through – a madman with a sword who struck this great leader. Perhaps it was someone acting in revenge over the death of the other kings. We are not told the reason; we are only told that the antichrist is killed in cold blood.

The world mourns as this king lies in state in some European embassy or castle. Television cameras from networks around the world are trained on the coffin, while others beam the tear-streaked faces of mourners who are lined up for miles to pay their last respects.

Suddenly, to the shock of everyone, and certainly to the millions of people watching global network news, this king suddenly opens his eyes, takes a deep breath, and sits up in his coffin. He then clambers over the side and walks up to a camera and announces to a stunned world that he is indeed the true Messiah – the one who was dead and is now, forevermore alive.

It is no wonder that John writes in Revelation 13:3b-4a,

... And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast;

they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast...

Who would not?!

Apart from the discerning grace of God, those who are dying for their testimony in Christ would, like John the Baptist, only wonder. John the Baptist, in desperation and doubt, incarcerated in a prison and about to die, sent his disciples to Jesus to ask,

... "Are You [really] the ... One, or shall we look for someone else?" (Matthew 11:3)

It does not look like our side is winning!

The world celebrates the victory of this king over death itself.

The world worships this man, but did you catch John's inspired phrase in verse 4a? Look again at the verse.

they worshiped the dragon...

"The dragon," as we have already learned, is Satan.

The raw truth is that by worshiping the antichrist, unbelievers will actually be worshiping Satan, the real power behind him. Some people will fully understand this, but most will probably be deceived. This is like those of whom Paul wrote in I Corinthians 10:20,

... the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God...

In other words, thinking that they were worshiping the god to whom they sacrificed, they were in reality worshiping the demonic world which was impersonating their false god.^{vii}

Whether they comprehend it or not, the unbelievers are giving allegiance to the power behind their false religion. In reality, the world will one day be dancing with the devil.

Many will go willingly. This is like one European leader, who some time ago actually said, "If the devil could offer a panacea for the problems of the world, I would gladly follow the devil."^{viii}

This will one day actually happen.

This is the recognition the devil has always wanted; this has been the longing of Satan... he desperately wants to be worshiped.^{ix}

This is Satan's finest hour! How he thrills to hear mankind chant their worship of his counterfeit Messiah. How he thrills to know he has influenced billions of worshipers away from God and unto himself. This is his highest achievement.

Notice what the world says in verse 4b.

... "Who is like the beast and who is able to wage war with him?"

These are rhetorical questions expecting the answer back, "No one is like the beast – the antichrist; no one is able to fight against him."

"How do you fight someone you cannot kill? How do you compare someone else to this one who before our very eyes arose from the dead – not

secretly like that other Messiah, the Carpenter, who disappeared after appearing to less than a thousand people at most? This one – the true Messiah – has shown the world his power over death and the grave. He has hidden nothing. He is the promised one.”

The world will go delirious with delight at this one who seems to be the answer to everything.^x

Perhaps this man is the one who can give to them eternal life.

Do you know what has been happening throughout world history? One author worded it, dress rehearsals for this event and this coming leader. The human heart hungers for a visible God and is ever ready to deify a leader who promises them what they want.^{xi}

I believe that Satan, throughout history, has always had a man ready. He does not know the moment of the rapture and the ensuing Tribulation when he can move forward with his global agenda, so for this reason he seems to have someone ready to go at any moment.

He was ready with Caligula and Nero.

He was ready with Napoleon and Robespierre.

He was ready with Mao and Hitler and Stalin.

These were puppets who sold their souls to war against Jesus Christ; puppet kings who would have gladly stepped forward to rule the world.

However, these men were not in God’s timing; they were not God’s choice. Satan would chew them up and spit them out as only one more failed attempt to rule the world through them.

Joseph Stalin’s daughter would, after his death, talk about her father, who was used by Satan to fight Christianity and literally martyr millions of Christians. She described something peculiar that he did on his deathbed. She said that just before he died, although he had been unconscious and unable to move much at all, he suddenly sat up in his bed, looked up at the ceiling, raised his clenched fists and shook them towards the ceiling. He then fell back on his pillow and died.

This was his last act of defiance against the Savior he so hated.

In his bunker, days before he would take his own life, Adolf Hitler whiled away his time with his close friends and mistress. The untold story, until years later, was that Hitler had been a man given over to the occultic underworld; an avid student of yoga, hypnotism, astrology, and Eastern occultism. Many now believe him to have been possessed by demonic

forces that caused him to do things that can only be explained by the darkness of Satan’s agenda against the Jew and the Christian and the world at large.

One of Hitler’s staff members, with him at his final hideaway, was a man named Rauschning. This man described a recurring scenario in Hitler’s final days when Hitler was no longer a comrade of Satan but a throwaway puppet king of no more use. Rauschning said, “[We would hear] Hitler yell for help . . . seized with power that made him tremble so violently his bed shook. There in his bedroom, his lips would turn blue and he would drip with sweat and he would be whispering in terror, ‘It is he! It is he! He is here!’”^{xii}

Whether he sensed Satan or Christ, whom he hated, we do not know.

Listen to this truth about the final false Messiah – the antichrist means nothing to Satan. He is only his greatest puppet, used as Satan’s final attempt to wrestle worship away from God.

For those of us who believe in Christ, the antichrist is not someone to be feared, but someone to be most pitied.

Like Judas Iscariot who did Satan’s bidding and then took his own life, as did Nero and Hitler after him – they danced with the devil and then died. And they will live with him one day, forever.

Conclusion

I will close our study today with a challenge and an invitation.

1. For those who believe in Jesus Christ, let me give a challenge to be discerning.

Even today, even without the antichrist to do his bidding, the Christian is in danger of being distracted by *the enemy*, or worse yet, deceived.

For everything that God has, Satan has a counterfeit. There are counterfeit Christians, whom we call hypocrites. There is a counterfeit church, which the Bible calls the “synagogue of Satan” (Revelation 3:9). There are seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (I Timothy 4:1). There are false messiahs and false prophets who will arise and perform great signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. (Matthew 7 and 24).^{xiii}

When trouble comes, will it detract from your worship; will it distract from your walk; will it divert your commitment?

Even now, this is our challenge in a world with false promises and antichrist agendas. Listen, dear

Christian, to the challenge of the apostle Peter who wrote,

The end of all things is near . . . (I Peter 4:7a)

I love this. If Peter thought the end was near, then what we can know for certain is that it is now 2,000 years nearer.

We believe the end of all things is really near. So what does this mean?!

Peter writes,

The end of all things is near; therefore . . .

. . . panic! No, this is not what he writes. Peter writes,

. . . be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Whoever is the [gifted] speaker, do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever is [gifted] in serving, do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

(I Peter 4:7-11)

For the believer then, let this discussion on last days call you to a pure way of living; to a gracious love and hospitality; to a committed service to the body of Christ with your spiritual gifts that God has entrusted to you to bless the church – whether speaking or serving. And along the way, the truth about the last days is meant to challenge us, as believers, toward living with discernment.

2. For unbelievers who are listening to my voice, let me give an invitation to deliverance.

My friend, a counterfeit works well only because it looks so much like the real thing. It models the truth as much as possible. It uses religious terminology; it genuflects at the Bible, or some steeple, or a cross; it hushes in reverence at the sight or sound of something spiritual or profound, but it wants nothing to do with Jesus Christ.

The antichrists of the world and the coming final antichrist will have so many people dying for them; Jesus Christ died for you.

I invite you to eternal deliverance. Do not follow the wrong Messiah. Even now, place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ – everyone else is a counterfeit. Only Christ is the One “to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

ⁱ Donna Leinwand, “Bogus Money Goes Mainstream,” USA Today (December 28, 2008).

ⁱⁱ Mark Hitchcock, Is the Antichrist Alive Today? (Multnomah Books, 2002), p. 20.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Robert L. Thomas, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 1995), p. 158.

^v Kendall H. Easley, Holman New Testament Commentary: Revelation (Holman, 1998), p. 227.

^{vi} David Jeremiah, What In the World Is Going On? (Thomas Nelson, 2008), p. 145.

^{vii} John MacArthur, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 2000), p. 46.

^{viii} Adrian Rogers, Unveiling the End Times In Our Time (Broadman, 2004), p. 154.

^{ix} Sam Gordon, Worthy Is the Lamb (Ambassador, 2000), p. 284.

^x John Phillips, Exploring Revelation (Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), p. 166.

^{xi} Ibid., p. 167.

^{xii} David Hunt, Peace, Prosperity and the Coming Holocaust, quoted by Erwin Lutzer, Hitler's Cross (Moody Publishers, 1998), p. 68.

^{xiii} Rogers, p. 157.