

HEALING STREAM MINISTRIES presents...

THE UNDILUTED, FULL STRENGTH, THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES

with enough power to...

- **cleanse from all sin**
- **set us free from all bondage**
- **break all the power of the enemy over us**
- **restore us to total spiritual health**
- **develop immunity to all last-day deceptions**

#11 – The Substitutes that Cannot Satisfy

About twenty years ago when I read the statement by Ellen G. White that the third angel's message is indeed the message of "justification by faith...in verity," (*Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890), I was motivated to dig deeper than ever before in the mines of the Scriptures to discover why this is really so. Again I want to emphasize that the approach in these e-mail devotionals does not replace or discard the traditional prophetic applications about the resurgence of the historical 'beast' and its place in last-day events. Knowing the specific identity of the beast and the sequence of last-day events will not give us immunity to the deceptions of the enemy unless we have also learned how to worship. While correct doctrinal information has an important place, it will not of itself lead us to genuine worship, praise, and adoration. When we in worship learn how to delight ourselves in our great God and His Son Jesus Christ and the sufficiency of their plan of salvation, then there is no way that the deceptive appeals of the beast will ever find a place in our hearts. Thus, the contents of these e-mail devotionals are not an *either/or* approach, but a *both/and* process that will expose the subtlety and deceptiveness of our own strategies of self-salvation, while at the same time leading us to a greater dependence on the perfect salvation provided us through Christ's atoning work.

In our last devotional we looked at the literary comparisons between the beast and the Lamb. For your recall, I will list them here.

The Lamb...

- receives authority from God
- seven horns
- seven eyes
- accused of blasphemy
- was, is, and is to come
- ministers for 3 ½ years
- protects the saints
- is slain
- and resurrected
- gives freedom
- worshipers of the Lamb rest
- sends Holy Spirit to lead to Christ
- reproduces "image of Christ" in followers
- seals followers in the forehead
- has a bride - Jerusalem

The Beast...

- receives authority from the dragon
- seven heads and ten horns
- ten horn on his heads
- names of blasphemy
- was, is not, and yet is
- continues for 42 months
- attacks the saints
- receives a deadly wound
- deadly wound is healed
- leads to captivity
- worshipers of the beast have no rest
- false prophet leads people to worship the beast.
- reproduces 'image to beast' in followers
- seals follows in the forehead or the hand
- has a harlot - Babylon

In addition to the historical applications of the beast, it is quite clear that the core principle of the beast is one of counterfeiting and imitating the work of Christ. What the beast offers is a substitute for the gospel of Christ. The beast imitates the substitutionary work of Christ as sufficient atonement for all our sins. But the offering of our own works and accomplishment is never a sufficient basis for salvation. It is indeed a substitute that cannot substitute. Such substitutes serve as our personal justification and cover-ups for sin. But cover-ups cannot cover sin because they cannot provide a legal basis for justification.

The idea of substitution is one of the key concepts of the gospel of Christ. *“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you...For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15,1,3). In the Old Testament the prophet Isaiah said about Jesus that *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”* (Isaiah 53:5,6).

The beast is a substitute for the saving work of Jesus Christ. But it is a substitution that is utterly ineffective and worthless. The beast presents himself and his own works – multiple heads, horns, crowns, mouths, great words etc. – as the basis for salvation. He pretends that his strength lies in his own appearance and abilities. He comes across as a religious superman, not as a needy sinner. The beast fittingly serves as a cartoon of our own lives when we trust in our own works as the basis of salvation. It just does not work. The beast is a picture of what our lives become when we try to save ourselves. The traits of the beast tell us a great deal about our pride, arrogance, self-centeredness, desire to impress, control, and generally have our own way – all the while pretending that our own works will serve as a substitute for the substitutionary work of Christ for us. Unless the core sin of pride in our lives is defeated, sin still remains in spite of all kinds of good outward behaviors. And there is only one way to defeat pride. It is the cross of Christ.

Christian preacher and author John R.W Stott has captured some of the essence this when he said, *“The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.”* (John R.W. Stott, The Cross of Christ, InterVarsity Press, 1986, p. 160).

Christian author Ellen G. White expressed it this way: *“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. “With His stripes we are healed”* (E.G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 25).

Augustus Toplady, Christian hymnwriter, speaks of the futility of this kind of misplaced trust.

Not the labor of my hands can fulfill the law’s demands...

...these for sin could not atone, Thou must save, and Thou alone.

The third angel’s message is basically this: Quit trusting in that which is not trustworthy. Stop depending on substitutes that cannot ever substitute and atone for sin.