

"The Beast From the Earth"

Revelation 13:11-18

The Beast from the Earth: {13:11-18}

Remember that we are in the midst of the third interlude, which takes place between the trumpet and bowl judgments. Thus far in this interlude, John has introduced us to the great red dragon (Satan) and the beast from the sea (Antichrist). Now John introduces us to a third key figure called the beast from the earth. This beast from the earth is none other than Antichrist's right hand man known in other places in the book of Revelation as the false prophet (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). The false prophet combined with Satan and Antichrist make up Satan's attempt to mimic the Holy Trinity. The combination of these three is popularly known as the unholy trinity. It is this third individual of the unholy trinity that the remainder of chapter 13 examines.

The Appearance of the False Prophet: (vs. 11)

And I saw another beast: At this point John sees an additional beast in his vision. The Greek term for *another* (*allos*) means "another of the same kind." He will have a similar nature and character as the first individual mentioned in 13:1-10. The term *beast* here means a wild beast or monster and indicates his ferocious nature. He will be of a similar ferocious and hostile nature as the first beast and both will be hostile toward God and His people.

Coming up out of the earth: There appears to be some contrast being made here in the origin of this second beast as opposed to the origin of the first. The picture of the first beast in 13:1-10 was that of coming up out of the sea. The sea as noted in that section likely denoted the Mediterranean Sea and identified the first beast as rising up out of the peoples of the Mediterranean area. The emphasis was on the Gentile origin of the first beast. Some have wrongly concluded that since this second beast is said to come up out of the earth, that it is a reference to the land of Israel and denotes the Jewish origin of this second beast. The problem with this view is that the term for earth is not used in this way anywhere else in the book of Revelation. It is usually a more broad term speaking of the world in general. In addition it would be difficult to see a Jew going along with the first beast's plan to annihilate the Jewish people. Thus the best conclusion is that this second beast comes up from the people of the world with no further identification as to his origin.

And he had two horns like a lamb: First of all in the Scriptures the term "horn" is often used figuratively to refer to strength, power or ruling authority. So the two horns of this beast refer to some sort of strength or ruling authority. The small horns of a lamb are relatively minor when compared to the 10 horned beast. Since the two horns are like those of a lamb, most commentators view this statement as depicting some sort of religious authority. This view is supported by the fact that this same individual is referred to as a false prophet elsewhere in Revelation (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10), that he leads the world to worship the first beast (13:12), and he commands the people to set up an image of the first beast in the temple (13:14-15). It is also noted that this statement represents the false prophet as being one who **appears** to be of a mild and gentle nature. Although he is truly of ferocious nature (*another beast*), he represents himself or appears before the world as one of a mild and gentle nature (*like a lamb*). He is truly a false prophet, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

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And he spoke as a dragon: The dragon is a reference back to the great red dragon of Revelation 12. Thus it is a reference to Satan. This second beast spoke as Satan. "Although docile in appearance, his speech will be subtle, seductive, and satanic, structured to lead people away from belief in Christ and into the cunning, corrupt worship of the Antichrist."⁴¹¹

* So this second beast is an individual who appears to be peaceful in nature, but is truly ferocious and deceitful in nature. He is truly motivated by Satan as he deceives the people of the world into worshipping Antichrist. He appears to be some sort of a religious leader, but is truly just a false prophet.

The Activity of the False Prophet: (vv. 12-18).

In this section of verses the Greek text automatically provides our outline for us. Four times a specific word is repeated in an identical form. The Greek word (*poiei*) usually translated "to do or make" is used to identify the specific work or activity of this false prophet. This is not so clearly revealed in the English text as it is translated "he exercises (vs. 12a); he makes (vs 12b); he performs (vs. 13); and he causes (vs 16). All of which are legitimate translations of this verb, but make it much more difficult to see the structure of the passage. So lets examine the activity of this false prophet.

He Exercises Authority: (vs. 12a)

The first activity listed of this second beast, the false prophet is the exercising of authority. Notice that it is not his own authority that he exercises, but the authority of the first beast. What authority the false prophet has is given to him by the Antichrist. Notice also that this authority is exercised in the presence of Antichrist. "The Greek phrase *enopion autou* translated "in his presence" implies that the first beast has general oversight of the second beast's activities."⁴¹² However, the Antichrist places enough confidence in this false prophet to entrust him with his authority.

He Causes the World to Worship the Antichrist: (vs. 12b)

His second activity mentioned here is that he directs or causes the world to worship the first beast. Actually the better sense here is that this false prophet **makes** the world worship the first beast. The phrase *the earth and those who dwell in it* is a comprehensive way of speaking of the unbelieving people of the world. It does not, however, speak of believers or even of the Jewish people who have already fled into the wilderness. This activity takes place specifically at the mid-point of the tribulation period when the Antichrist has been healed of his fatal wound. Once the Antichrist is restored to life, the false prophet makes the people of the world worship him. The repetition of the phrase *whose fatal wound was healed* (see vs. 3) emphasizes this as the dramatic action that enables the false prophet to motivate the world to worship the Antichrist. The phrase as mentioned when dealing with verse 3 seems to be clearly suggestive of a literal death and resurrection. Remember at the least it **appears** to be a death and resurrection to the people of the world. The false prophet will have no problem motivating the majority of the world to worship the Antichrist because they will be amazed by this great healing act. There will be some however that will not be so convinced and will be killed according to verse 15.

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He Performs Great Signs: (vv. 13-15)

The next activity of this false prophet is the capability to perform great signs. Signs in the Scripture are usually used to prove the authenticity of a particular message or individual. Here these great signs of this false prophet serve a similar purpose. It is an attempt to prove the authenticity of the message of the false prophet and the person of the Antichrist. These are likely real supernatural miracles that are performed by this individual in which God allows this activity to take place. This false prophet using the power of Satan is able to perform many great and convincing signs to the point of deceiving the elect if possible (Matthew 24:24).

His great signs extend to include making fire come down out of heaven to the earth. This is a miracle that James and John desired to perform, but were denied (Luke 9:54). It is also similar to the miracle Elijah performed on more than one occasion (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10).

The purpose of this false prophet's signs is deception (*And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast*). The deception is that this false prophet will deceive men into worshipping a false god, the Antichrist. He does so by telling them to make an image of the beast. This obviously will be some sort of a statue of the Antichrist.

At this point in the text it once again reiterates the death and resurrection of the first beast. The continuous repetition of this fact throughout chapter 13 leads to the conclusion that this may have indeed literally happened as opposed to being a staged event for deception. While it is impossible to know for sure, it does seem quite convincing from the strength of the language used and the consistent repetition of the event that Antichrist is indeed killed and returned to life.

Not only does this false prophet command the people to erect such an idolatrous image, but he performs an additional great sign of giving the image the ability to breath and speak. Such an ability of enabling an inanimate object to breath and speak would be quite convincing to many people that these two individuals are who they claim to be. Obviously all will not be convinced to worship the Antichrist for it is necessary for some to be killed because they do not worship him. Evidently the false prophet somehow enables this image to not only breath and speak, but also to cause those who do not worship the beast or his image to be killed. From this point on it will be very difficult for the tribulation saints. Their refusal to worship the first beast and his image will result in death and as we will see shortly their refusal to take the mark of this beast will result in the inability to buy or sell.

He Causes the Placing of a Mark: (vv. 16-18)

The final activity of this false prophet mentioned here in the text is the causing of all to be given a mark. "The regulation is issued that all classes of people who worship the beast are to receive a mark in their right hands or in their foreheads and that possession of this mark is necessary to buy or sell. All classes are included in three contrasting pairs: the small and the great, referring to status; the rich and the poor, alluding to possessions; and the free men and the slaves, referring to their state in society."⁴¹³ "The word *mark* (*charagma*) was used in the first century. It referred to the imprint from an imperial seal of the Roman Empire bearing the name and date of the emperor and used on official documents or coins.

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This mark is a visible brand or tattoo signifying ownership, loyalty, and protection—similar to that given to soldiers, slaves, and those who worshipped the emperor in the first century."⁴¹⁴ "This mark will allow people to engage in daily commerce, including the purchase of food and other necessities. Without the identifying mark, individuals will be cut off from the necessities of life."⁴¹⁵ This mark will consist of either the name or number of the first beast, the Antichrist. "Whatever his name is it will be inherent in a numbering system. It is not clear exactly what this name or numbering system will be or what its significance will be."⁴¹⁶ As John closes out this vision he offers further information for the understanding of this mark. John provides the calculation of the number of the beast as being 666. "This is the essential number of a man. The number 6 falls one short of God's perfect number, 7, and thus represents human imperfection. Antichrist, the most powerful human the world will ever know, will still be just a man. The ultimate in human and demonic power is a 6, not perfect as God is. The 3-fold repetition of the number is intended to reiterate and underscore man's identity. When Antichrist is revealed, there will be some way to identify him with this basic number of a man, or his name may have the numerical equivalent of 666. (In many languages including Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, letters have numerical equivalents.) **Because this text reveals very little about the meaning of 666, it is unwise to speculate beyond what is said.**⁴¹⁷ The purpose of this mark is to drive the people of the world into the worship of and service of the Antichrist.