

The Final False Prophet, Part 1

Scripture: Revelation 13:11-14

Code: 66-47

I want you to turn in your Bible to Revelation chapter 13, Revelation chapter 13. Tonight we're going to take a look at a very imposing and a very remarkable text of Scripture, the second half of this chapter which presents to us a portrait of the final false prophet...the final false prophet.

Let me read you, starting at verse 11, "I saw another beast coming up out of the earth and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast whose fatal wound was healed. And he performs great signs so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men, and he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given to him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great and the rich and the poor and the free man and the slaves to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom, let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast for the number is that of a man and his number is six hundred and sixty-six."

The work of God to redeem men and to establish the kingdom of Christ has not been easy. In fact, it's always been a battle. And the reason for the battle is because Satan and his hosts of demons have fought God all along the way. The most dominant aspect of Satan's war, the major weapon in Satan's arsenal against God and God's purpose can be summed up in one word, that word is deception. He is a liar and the father of lies, he is a deceiver. He is disguised as an angel of light and his messengers are also disguised as angels of light, though they are the demons of darkness. Satan is always trying to confuse people by covering up the truth of the saving gospel, the truth of the Word of God with lies that are masquerading as if they were the truth. Satan has from the very beginning of God's enterprise attempted to barrage the world with demon doctrines coming from seducing spirits through false teachers and false prophets.

If then the major enterprise of Satan in endeavoring to fight against God is deception, then the major agents of Satan are deceivers, be they demons or be they men. And as the world moves closer to the return of Christ and closer to the consummation of God's plan, and closer to the coming of the

kingdom that has been promised, you can be sure that Satan will escalate the efforts of false prophets. The closer we get to the end, the more false prophets will proliferate.

In Matthew chapter 24, some very familiar words from the Lord Himself. "For many will come in My name saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." Verse 11, "And many false prophets will arise and will mislead many." Again predicting the same kind of proliferation at the end time in Mark 13:22, the Scripture says that Jesus spoke and said, "False Christs and false prophets will arise and will show signs and wonders in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray."

And so the promise of Scripture is that there will be a myriad of false prophets, ever more and more of them as we get closer to the end. Matthew 24:24 says precisely the very same thing.

Now at the very climax of all this escalating proliferation of false prophets, fed, I think, by the proliferation of demons that are released from the pit and from the Euphrates River which we read about earlier, there will be more demons than ever running all over the earth, all the ones who were in the heavens will be cast to earth, all the ones in the pit who are not eternally bound will be released, those bound at the Euphrates will run rampant over the earth. And with more demons will come more deceiving spirits with more deceiving spirits will come more hypocritical deceiving false prophets and liars. And it will all finally consummate in the ultimate final false prophet. We have just read the description of this man. He will be Satan's last and most awesomely powerful deceiving hypocritical liar.

He is called a beast, a beast that comes out of the earth. Now the first ten verses of this chapter described another beast. If you'll go back to verse 1 you see there a beast coming up out of the sea. And we have learned already that that describes one who is commonly known as the Antichrist, though there are many antichrists, there is one who is the consummate final and ultimate Antichrist. There were antichrists even in the New Testament time for the New Testament says there are already many antichrists. But there will be one consummate final world ruler, one great political power, one imperial world dictator, indwelt by a demon spirit who comes up out of the abyss. And we saw him described in the first half of this very same chapter. He is also rather carefully described in the second chapter of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. If you read 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 you will read about him, he is called the lawless one. He will be powerful. He will come in the activity of Satan with all power and signs and false wonders and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish. And with him will come a deluding influence, a damning influence.

This first beast out of the sea, this Antichrist is also called by Daniel the little horn, the king of fierce countenance, or fierce face. He is called the willful king. He is called by Paul the son of perdition and the man of sin. He is a blasphemer who makes war with the saints. He embodies all the evil powers of all world empires. He exercises the power of Satan, the power of demons and all the power of men. He will be the greatest world ruler ever, dominating all the earth. But he is not alone. In fact,

he has a partner in this massive satanic system of final ultimate deception, and his partner is the final false prophet. The Antichrist is primarily a political and military leader, the false prophet is a religious leader. And here we have political power, military power, joined with religious power. Political power, military power dominating the external world; spiritual power dominating the internal world.

So the Antichrist not only has the devil and his hellish demons, he not only has the accumulated power of all demonic and human sovereignties, he not only has control of the governments of all the globe, but he also has a potent companion who promotes his power and aids him greatly by swaying the hearts of people into satanic religion. His aid will be religious, it will be spiritual. He will cause the world to worship the Antichrist as if he were God. So his power will not just be the power that is political or military or economic, he will have great religious power because the false prophet will convince the world that this Antichrist is God and is the only hope of the salvation of the crushing crumbling world that is going to bits during this time of Tribulation. They will buy the lie of the false prophet, they will bow down and worship the Antichrist as if he were God, and they will be destroyed and damned with him.

The work of the false prophet is critical to the effort of Satan because the power of religion over men's minds is so great. I think any of us who knows anything about man and how he operates from a historic viewpoint understands that man does not live without some transcendent belief system. It is built into the very fabric of man's life to believe in some transcendent power, something beyond himself, some faith exists in all men, faith in the supernatural, faith in the mystical, faith in the psychic, faith in something that is divine or something that is invisible.

There is then in the heart of man that longing, that desire to touch something transcendent, something beyond himself, something greater than his trouble and his circumstances, someone that can deliver him from what is going on all around him. And in the time of the Great Tribulation, you're going to know that people are going to be looking for a deliverer. They're going to be desperately looking for some transcendent power in which they can believe. And the Antichrist by Satan's design will be that power and the false prophet will convince the world that indeed he is. The false prophet will come along as the greatest preacher, I think, the greatest false preacher the world has ever heard. You've heard great preachers, you've heard gifted orators, the world has known many of them through its history. But none like this one. He is so powerful that his preaching sways the entire world.

True or false, human nature must have a religion. Man is an incurable worshiper. He needs somebody beyond himself to believe in, even if he can't identify who it is, even if it is somewhat nebulous and he gives it a somewhat nebulous name. But in this case, there will be nothing nebulous about his worship, it will be attached to a human being who is indwelt by a formidable demon right out of the pit itself. The Antichrist, who then opposes God, who himself declares that he is above everything and everyone who is called God and demands that the whole world worship him will find

that that indeed will be accomplished through the agency of this false prophet.

So the false prophet then leads the world into the final form of world religion which is the worship of the Antichrist at the very end. John Phillips writing on the book of Revelation says, "The dynamic appeal of the false prophet will lie in his skill in combining political expediency with religious passion. His arguments will be subtle, convincing and appealing. His oratory will be hypnotic, for he will be able to move the masses to tears or whip them into a frenzy. He will control the communication media of the world and will skillfully organize mass publicity to promote his ends. He will manage and massage his message with guile beyond words. He will mold world thought and shape human opinion like so much pottery for clay," end quote. That's a good description of what this individual most likely will do. He will be the greatest, the most persuasive, the most powerful, the most moving, the most convincing communicator ever. You can believe that. Satan would not finish out his last effort with anything less than his greatest effort.

And he becomes the final figure in the false trinity...Satan, the counterfeit of God the father; Antichrist, the counterfeit of God the Son; and the false prophet, the counterfeit of God the Holy Spirit.

Now this second beast here is called the false prophet. Not in this chapter, but in three other places in Revelation. Revelation chapter 16 and verse 13 he is called the false prophet, Revelation 19 and verse 20 and Revelation 20 verse 10. In all three of those Scriptures he is identified as the false prophet. His purpose is to direct the attention of the world toward the Antichrist and cause the whole world to worship him. He does that amazingly by the power of Satan and is successful. He will be a religious preacher convincing the world to worship the Antichrist.

Now just by way of a little bit of background, such a partnership between sheer political power and religion is not new. In the days of Pharaoh, for example, we would think of Pharaoh as the great world power, but we remember when Moses and Aaron stood beside Pharaoh, the head of Egypt, he called in two magical priests by the name of Jannes and Jambres. Religionists of his empire, he asked them to oppose the God of the Israelites. He was a pagan king with great political and military might who had brought alongside himself those kinds of people who by their signs and wonders, their mystical powers could sway the hearts of men and women.

When Balak, powerful formidable king of Moab, sought to destroy Israel, what did he do? He went out to find a prophet, a religious man. He hired the services of the corruptible prophet Balaam to curse Israel. Military power wasn't enough, political power wasn't enough, he wanted religious power. In the days of Dan, when that marauding tribe conquered Laish, you remember they stoke a priest and an ephod in order to worship some deity. It wasn't enough that they were powerful, that they were awesome in power, could conquer their foes, they wanted some transcendent deity to assist them. You remember Absalom, when Absalom began his revolution to destroy his father David, he did so by using the assistance of Ahithophel. When Jeroboam revolted against Judah, he felt

compelled to build gods of gold at Bethel and Dan and elicit the service of deities in his revolt. And then there was Ahab and Jezebel who were able to accomplish their idolatrous debauchery of Israel by using as their cohorts the foul priests of Baal.

Coming down into a more modern time, Hitler had both personal demon contacting mediums for himself. And with the help of those demonic sources developed a new kind of Christianity to manipulate the hearts of the people in his own nation.

So it has always been. Even Rome, though it had world power by its might wanted to make sure that people worshiped Caesar as if he was God because there is in the heart of every person a need to worship at the shrine of some transcendent power. The communist empire of eastern Europe tried to defy that. With their atheism they conquered by force. But they had to control the people on the outside because there was no religious faith on the inside. And so it became absolutely a police state. And as soon as their external power was broken, the whole thing disintegrated. And what was once the Soviet Union fractured into the pieces that were in existence before it ever began because there was no unified belief system to hold them together. In fact, they reverted back in many cases to the belief system that was theirs before it ever started.

Politics and religion may start out as distinct forces, but ultimately in consummate power they must unite. And Revelation 17 makes it clear that a worldwide form of universal religion is going to take shape in the end time. If you look over at Revelation 17, I don't want to read it to you but just look at it and starting in verse 1 you can flow right down through verse 9 and you will see described there a worldwide system of religion very clearly defined. Then down at the end, I want to draw you to verses 15 to 17. Now the worldwide system of religion...and I won't read all of this...is described here in verse 5 as Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth. This is the designation of world religion, the final consummate form of world religion. It's described in verse 3 as a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns and clothed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls and having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality. Verse 6 says this false form of world religion is drunk with the blood of the saints. Why? Because false religion has always been the murderer of true religion and it will certainly be true in the end time when they massacre the true believers and those who are the witnesses who adhere to Jesus Christ. There you have a picture of that system, that woman sitting on a beast, that is a picture of the final form of world religion in the time of the Tribulation.

The woman, now follow this, the woman sits on the beast, the woman is the harlot and there is a sense in which you have the beast who is the political, military power, and riding the beast is this religious system. Now what leads us to believe is that these two things will coexist. There will be the developing, amassing power of Antichrist on the military, economic and...the military side of it, the political side of it, but riding right along will be this false religious system. So what you have is the

Antichrist gaining his power through the military, the political realm, and the beast...and rather the false prophet gathering his power through the false religious system. So they will coexist for a while. This is a very important point to understand this chapter. They will coexist.

But go to the end of chapter 17 for a moment and I want to show you what will happen. The end of chapter 17 and verse 15, you see the waters where the harlot sits are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues, the ten horns which you saw in the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked and eat her flesh and burn her up with fire.

Wait a minute, what happens here? The beast on whose back the false religious system is riding all of a sudden rises up and destroys that false religious system. That's the picture. And verse 17, "For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose." In other words, the things which were two, that is the Antichrist and his military political kingdom and the false prophet and his religious kingdom which is a worldwide religious system over which the false prophet has power, God wants them to be one, not two. And so the Antichrist rises up and destroys that false religious system. And they now have a common purpose. They give over their kingdom to the beast. So in the end the only world religion left is the worship of Antichrist. That's not going to be how it starts. World religion will develop around some other mystical supernaturally concocted demonic system that will pull the whole world together and they will worship in a way that is not yet the worship of the Antichrist until some point when the Antichrist rises up, destroys that system and makes the whole world worship him.

When is that? I believe that is precisely what Daniel calls and what Jesus referred to as the abomination of desolations. It happens three and a half years into the Great Tribulation. There comes a point when the false world religion is destroyed in favor of worshiping Antichrist, and Antichrist alone. He will be at that point having risen to power by the middle of the week, he will be in a prominent predominant place. And what is the abomination of desolation? It is when the Antichrist sets himself up as God. That is precisely what he does. At that point, at the very midpoint, all other religion is destroyed. The man of lawlessness, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2 comes, he's revealed, he's the son of destruction, verse 4, he opposes, exalts himself above every so-called God or object of worship. He takes his seat in the temple of God, he displays himself as being God. That is the abomination of desolations, three and a half years into the Tribulation, Daniel says it's going to happen. Jesus reiterates the same thing in Matthew chapter 24. And when that happens, that signals the last three and a half years which is called Great Tribulation, the fiercest of the wrath of God begins to be poured out, culminating in the day of the Lord. So politics and religion start out separate, and then they ultimately unite.

To borrow the words of Jesus, "The kingdom divided against itself cannot stand," and the final kingdom of Satan will not be divided against itself, it will unite in a final form both politics and religion in Satan's last effort to establish his kingdom on earth and prevent the Lord Jesus Christ from setting

up His own. Now from that midpoint, the whole world then is directed to worship the Antichrist. He is the only god, there is no other religion. Whatever other religion has been tolerated in this form of world religion, whatever other components of worship have been allowed are not longer allowed. The whole world must worship the Antichrist. And anybody who doesn't will be killed. At least the threat of death is against them.

Now back to the book of Revelation for a moment. The worship of the Antichrist with the aid of the false prophet then becomes the central focus of the world. And if you look at chapter 14 and verse 9, you read, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, he receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand." Verse 11 again talks about those who worship the beast and his image receive the mark of his name. Chapter 15 verse 2, it talks about those who would come off victorious from the beast and from his image and the number of his name and you can see what happened is the whole world looks at nothing but the beast and his image...the beast and his image. That is the image of the idol that replicates the Antichrist. That idol will be established right in Jerusalem as we said, and that will be the focal point of worship and he will be the only one worshiped.

Chapter 16 we see it again in verse 2 where you have those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. You see it again in chapter 19 verse 20, chapter 20, there's only one individual worship from here on out, from the midpoint on everything focuses on Antichrist.

Now it's difficult to speculate with any kind of success about who the false prophet will be. Some have suggested the false prophet might be a pope. That certainly is possible, if he can have that kind of religious power, if he can by the operation of demons through his own human ingenuity and cleverness and communicating skills, sway the entire world, if a pope can be the one who orchestrates a world religion, it could be a pope. On the other hand, it could be somebody else. We can't be absolutely certain. It is interesting to note in Revelation 17 that a city of seven hills is identified as being at the heart of the false religious system. Throughout history Rome has been known as such a city. We'll say more about that when we get to chapter 17, there are some characteristics there that lend to the credence of such a viewpoint.

But this false religion will grow in the first three and a half years, and then it will be dismissed in favor of the singular worship of the Antichrist. And, of course, by the middle point there have been many judgements and many frightening things have happened and many people have died and once the midpoint event happens, then things begin to escalate and the world in a panic will be looking for somebody to deliver them. When the false prophet starts pointing at the Antichrist, starts doing signs and wonders that are humanly inexplicable, he will gain the affirmation and the faith of the world on behalf of the Antichrist. The Antichrist, of course, will have a false resurrection, the world will think he's come back from the dead. There will be an image created, as we note in the text, that will be able to speak and there will be all kinds of things happening in the sky and fire coming down and all of this is to draw the world to worship the Antichrist.

This is so blasphemous because what they ought to be doing is getting ready to worship the Christ, right? Thus the partnership begins.

Now let's look into this amazing text. That's just, by the way, a few thoughts of introduction. Verse 11 of chapter 13, and we'll look at his person...his person. Very simply, he is described as a beast coming up out of the earth. The beast has to do with a wild animal, therion, he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon.

Now some people have suggested that this describes a system. Some have suggested it describes a government. Some have suggested it describes an ideology. But none of those really fits into the context very well. It is better to understand it as a person. Clearly the first beast was a person, and this is allon therion, allon meaning another of the same kind. If Antichrist is a person, and this is another beast like him, then this is a person also. Furthermore, false prophet is a personal designation. And as I said, it's used three times in the book of Revelation to describe this individual.

Furthermore, in Revelation 19:20, both the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire, and God doesn't cast systems, governments and ideologies into hell, he casts individuals there. And so clearly this is a person. As I have been saying, a very clever, powerful, persuasive captivating charming genius who is demon inspired, demon empowered, the combination of the powers of hell and the powers of his own human talent cause him to be convincing.

It tells us...this is an interesting statement...that he comes up out of the earth. You remember the first beast came out of the sea and that represents darkness, blackness, the mysterious, the unknown, the pit, the abyss. And I see that as indication that this individual called the Antichrist became indwelt by some powerful demon that comes up out of the pit.

But here you have somewhat similar origin from below the earth. It doesn't say that he comes from on the earth, it says he comes up out of the earth. And again this might well be a reference to that flaming inferno that is at the heart of the earth, he comes up from below, that's the point, anabaino, he comes up from below, from beneath. Again I think it indicates that the false prophet will be controlled and indwelt and empowered and impelled by some formidable demonic spirit.

And yet, the earth is not as mysterious, it's not as foreboding, it's not as unknown as the sea. It's not the dark and the black place that the sea is. And so the difference here may be simply the Scripture's way of explaining that there is a somewhat significant difference in these two. The Antichrist is mysterious and dark and black and frightening and foreboding. But this man is a subtler, gentler, more domesticated individual. He is not so overpowering, he's not so frightening, he's not a terrorizing power like Antichrist. But rather he is winsome, and he is persuasive. He is the epitome of the wolf in sheep's clothing described by Jesus in Matthew 7. Some have suggested the earth means

that he is a Jew, but Jews aren't identified with the earth so much, they're identified with the land, that's a different word, ge, so there's no reason to assume that he will be a Jew at this particular point because he comes up out of the earth. Could be a Jew, but that's not conclusive, he could be a Gentile.

But the description of him gives us a somewhat subtle, gentle deceptiveness because notice the first beast was just plain scary. Ten horns, seven heads, ten crowns, blasphemous names, he's like a leopard and a bear and a lion. And he's got the power of the dragon. And he's got this mortal wound in one of his heads. I mean, this is a frightening looking thing.

But notice down in verse 11 the difference. The false prophet had two horns like a lamb. Have you ever seen a little lamb as it begins to sprout horns, two little bumps? Harmless. And that's his subtlety. Certainly he is in some ways weaker than the Antichrist but still powerfully deceptive. He doesn't come like the Antichrist. The Antichrist comes fiercely like a leopard and a bear and a lion ripping and tearing rapaciously, speedily moving across the world. But here is this subtle, gentle lamb. There's a sense in which he could also be called Antichrist because he is Antichrist and he is a pseudochrist masquerading as if he were the true lamb. But the point of the description is to show us the subtlety of his approach. He doesn't come in imperial power, he doesn't come raping and killing and devastating, he comes as a deceiver. He comes as a false lamb. He comes appearing to be gentle. He comes wanting to comfort and with a certain kind of tenderness, but he's lending his aid to the Antichrist. Here Satan, in a sense, counterfeits Jesus Christ, this is his masterpiece of religious deception, the counterfeit of the true Lamb. But when he opens his mouth he gives himself away. Verse 11 says, "He spoke as a dragon." That's a strange voice for a lamb. He is Satan's mouthpiece, that's why he speaks like a dragon. When he opens his mouth, whose words come out? Satan's.

I believe when he speaks hell will speak through his mouth, just as they used to say when Adolph Hitler spoke it wasn't his own voice. I think he will be completely controlled by hellish powers and when he speaks it will be the voice of the dragon. But he will not necessarily speak monstrous things against God, as the Antichrist will, according to Daniel 11. He will not, as verse 5 says, speak arrogant words and blasphemies. He will speak rather winsomely about the Antichrist. Satan's Antichrist will blaspheme God, but Satan's false prophet will lure people to worship Antichrist.

I want you to remember something. False prophets are not like Antichrist. They don't come blaspheming God. They come deceptively. They come looking like lambs but when they speak

it's the voice of the dragon. Satan's false prophets are the voices of hell, even now, even today. They may appear meek and mild and lamblike. They may appear to be gentle preachers who come to solve the problems of men and women and bring them truth, but when they open their mouth the

dragon talks. The dragon is none other than Satan, as we learned back in chapter 12.

So in the midst of the Tribulation with all of its terrors and all of its fears, and all of its death, and all of its destruction, the false prophet will come along as a little lamb offering deceptive comfort to the burdened and the disturbed, those who have been maimed and wounded and injured in all of the fiery judgments that are hurdling in every area, he will offer them hope, hope to a pained world if they will just worship the Antichrist. He will be powerfully persuasive but his voice is the voice of hell. And hell can speak blasphemy or it can speak subtle deception. And so, his person is introduced to us.

The second point that you see in this text is his power...his power. And I'll just introduce this to you. Verse 12, "He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence."

Some people have suggested that this means he replaces the first beast so that he alone rules in the Great Tribulation. That's impossible since both of them are cast into the lake of the fire at the end of the Great Tribulation. And since the very task of this individual is to point to the Antichrist and to establish the worship of the world in his behalf. And you will then notice this, I can't imagine why...I read that view and couldn't imagine why anybody would hold it because he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. That is in the very presence of Antichrist. He is there. He is alongside of him. And he has worldwide influence, worldwide reputation as a miracle worker and a great preacher, maybe the greatest who ever lived apart from those who were the true preachers of God's truth. He exercises the same kind of demon power, the same kind of authority the Antichrist does because he is empowered by the same source. While the Antichrist is Satan's false Christ, the false prophet is Satan's false Holy Spirit. He is able, as I said, to put together a world religion, uniting all of Satan's diverse systems into one. The house divided becomes united. It is his tremendous ability that pulls it off.

Can you imagine creating one world religion that everybody agrees on? Buddhists, Muslims, and everybody else, Protestants, Catholics, every other world religion, they all come together under this amazing man. And then he turns it all into a cult of the first beast. And verse 12 then says, "He makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast."

By the way, you see that little phrase in the middle of the verse, "he makes...could be translated...he causes." It is used eight times of him. He causes this to happen. Eight times it says he causes this to happen, he causes this to happen. He has tremendous world influence.

Now beside his great personal influence and persuasive speaking, and astounding leadership ability, his effort is aided by one massive apparent miracle. Please notice the end of verse 12. "He gets the whole world to worship the first beast whose fatal wound was healed." Back in verse 3 you remember that it tells us that one of his heads was slain and his fatal wound was healed and the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast. There's also an indication of this same

amazing thing over in chapter 17 where he is called the beast that was and is not and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. He was, he is not, he's coming back. This could refer to a restored and revived Roman Empire and could speak of that government or that entity. But it's probably better to assume that what this is talking about is a carefully crafted deception of a resurrection. Personally I question that it could be a real resurrection because Satan doesn't have the power to give life. The Bible says he has the power of death but not the power of life. I believe what you have here is a carefully crafted resurrection, a fake resurrection, pulled off with tremendous human ingenuity and satanic skill.

Not only...listen carefully...not only to imitate the Lord's resurrection, but to imitate the resurrection back in chapter 11. You remember back in 11 that the two witnesses were killed and then after three and a half days, verse 11 of chapter 11 says they rose from the dead, the breath of life from God came into them, they stood on their feet and they came to life. And I believe in order to gain the kind of credibility that the Antichrist wants in the world, he's going to have to fabricate a resurrection to imitate the two witnesses, to imitate our Lord Himself. How that's going to happen, I don't know but it doesn't seem to be too formidable a task. And we discussed it in some detail in our study of the first ten verses.

Then notice verse 13 quickly. In addition to having the full authority of the Antichrist functioning alongside the Antichrist, using the fabricated resurrection to draw attention to him as supernatural, he performs great signs, verse 13, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. He performs great signs. Quite an interesting phrase. I looked that little Greek phrase up, semeion megalá, that same phrase is used of Christ. Again he is counterfeiting Christ. He performs great signs. When used of Christ it's used to describe our Lord's miracles. You can find that in John 2:11, John 2:23, John 6:2, etc. It also mimics not only the Lord but again it mimics the two witnesses. Back in chapter 11 we remember from verses 3 and following that the two witnesses had amazing ability to do things. Fire also came out of their mouths and devoured their enemies. They had the power to shut up the sky that it might not rain during the days of their prophesying. They could have power over the waters to turn them into blood. They could smite the earth with every plague as often as they desired. So Satan has got to counterfeit those true witnesses, as well as counterfeit Jesus Christ, because he's got to make the whole world believe that this Antichrist is more powerful than any of God's witnesses, any of the true witnesses and more powerful even than Jesus Christ.

So the Antichrist then has this immense power and so does his partner, the false prophet, to sway the whole world. Again I'm reminded of 2 Thessalonians. It says his power and signs and wonders come with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish because they didn't love...receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. Anyone rejecting the gospel, anyone who won't receive the truth is going to be deceived and they're going to believe that indeed the Antichrist is God, indeed he did rise from the dead, indeed these are powerful signs of supernatural strength and authority and we can put

our trust in the Antichrist and he's going to deliver us from whatever is going on, whatever terrible things are happening. You remember now, at this time they'll all be blaspheming the God of heaven, blaspheming the God of heaven, cursing the God of heaven and putting their trust in the Antichrist.

Now you say, "Well what are these signs that he can do? What are these amazing convincing signs?" Well Satan can do some pretty amazing stuff. He can do some supernatural works. Go back and read Exodus chapter 7, remind yourself of Jannes and Jambres, they're identified in 2 Timothy 3:8, and remind yourself of what the magicians in Pharaoh's court did. They copycated the miracles that God was doing. I'll give you one illustration. Exodus chapter 7, the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in verse 8, "When Pharaoh speaks to you saying, `Work a miracle,' you shall say to Aaron, `Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh that it may become a serpent.'" Just throw your stick down and it will become a serpent. "Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh and thus they did just as the Lord had commanded and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants and it became a serpent. Pharaoh called for the wise men and the sorcerers and they also the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts. For each one threw down his staff and they turned into serpents." One difference, Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. But the point is, Satan can fabricate supernatural signs.

Specifically one of them that he does, this false prophet, is identified here. He makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth. Apparently the Greek text would indicate continually. This is something that goes on all the time. And he does it in the presence of men. Why? Because he wants to convince them of his power. Is he trying to imitate the day of Pentecost? I don't think so. Is he trying to imitate the power of Elijah? Perhaps. Second Kings 1:10 to 12 talks about Elijah's power with fire, but more than likely he's trying to imitate the two witnesses our of whose mouths fire came and devoured those who attempted to take their lives.

You say, "Where does he get the power to do this?" Well a rather modest skill in the use of pyrotechnics could do that. What they do in movies and the firework displays that they put on, when they blow up all kinds of things all over the screens and all over the things you see on television, the ability to do that kind of thing would be probably enough in that day with all the rest of the stuff that's going on in the world to convince people. It may be that they have some capability from a supernatural source to put on those kinds of signs, but it doesn't have to be that way. There could be all kinds of ways in which it is done. And by the way, God has often used fire out of heaven. He used it to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain in Genesis 19. He sent it out of heaven in Leviticus 10 to burn up Nadab and Abihu. He sent fire from heaven on Mount Carmel to respond to Elijah's prayer. God has demonstrated His supernatural power by fire, and so here is Satan's counterfeit, trying to do the very same thing. And whether there is actually some miraculous component or whether it's pure pyrotechnics, whatever the case might be with regard to that, it's going to convince a lot of folks, in fact the whole world. With all of the capability that the world has now to dance around in space in all the little metal cans we send out there, it wouldn't be very difficult

to fabricate these kinds of things.

And with that in mind, you might consider...I just draw your attention to one Scripture that comes to mind, in Malachi 4:5, "I'm going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord and he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." The prophet said that before the great consummation and the coming of the kingdom of Christ, Elijah would come back. The Jews have always known that Elijah was one in whose life there was the evidence of supernatural fire and it could be that this is a counterfeit Elijah, this is Satan's counterfeit prophet, counterfeit...counterfeiting the forerunner of the true Messiah because he himself is the forerunner, as it were, or the prophet speaking of the false messiah.

And so it is that he comes with tremendous power. Then the last verse dealing with his power is verse 14. "He deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given to him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth." He leads them astray.

Consider the vulnerability of people. Disaster after disaster after disaster, holocaust after holocaust after holocaust, death all over everyplace, great cataclysmic events destroy a fourth of the earth, a little while later they destroy a third of the earth, demons running all over the globe maiming people with their sting so that they cry for mercy but cannot die, and then another wave of demons that slaughter people, wars all over the place, people killing each other, the sky falling, the level of desperation is beyond imagination, and they are ready to believe in anything except the true God because they've rejected the gospel and they're cursing the God who is doing this to them and they're looking for a deliverer. Along comes the false prophet, pulls off the shenanigans that convince the whole world their only hope is in this great Antichrist. They will already know what a formidable guy he is because he will have attained world control. And the false prophet will not just be some guy who walked in out of the desert or got off the latest bus, he will be the most formidable religious ruler and leader on the face of the earth and its greatest communicator. Between the two of them and whatever else they can pull off either supernaturally or by human genius, they will cause everybody in the whole world to be deceived.

In fact, they will erect an idol, verse 14 says, to the image of the beast. And they'll erect it in Jerusalem in defiance of the true God.

Well, you see his person and his power. More to come in our next study.

Father, as we think about this we might be asking ourselves...what does this mean? What does this say to me? How does it apply? And, Lord, so many things flood my mind. First of all, we feel so blessed to know how history is going to end, so blessed to know that even though there will come the Antichrist and the false prophet and the whole world will blaspheme Your name, even though Satan will amass the greatest power demonic and human, You will triumph. And how we rejoice that we are on the winning side, not by anything that we have done but by Your grace. How we rejoice that the best effort, the supreme effort of Satan and the unholy trinity of the Antichrist and the false prophet cannot withstand Your power, cannot thwart Your purpose, cannot stop the coming of Christ, cannot deny the kingdom for which we wait. What confidence it gives us, what hope, what undiminished anticipation.

And yet on the other hand, the practicality of this text is that there is a world that will die and perish in the lake of fire along with the false prophet and the Antichrist because they have not embraced the Savior. And as Paul said, "Knowing the terror of the Lord to come, we persuade men." How it should motivate us to give the gospel. We think of those wonderful testimonies we heard tonight, we think of Donna who was near death in a suicide attempt and saved at the very last moment from the horrors of hell and brought into the kingdom of light and the hope of heaven. So many, Lord, who will know Your terror. Help us to be faithful to persuade men to come to Christ.

And, Father, here we see Satan so aggressive in his enterprise and a false prophet who is able to sway the whole world and who has alongside of him many other false prophets, we're amazed at the great and successful effort they make in behalf of the enemy. We have to as our own selves if we are so devoted to You. We would ask that You would make many faithful true prophets, true preachers who will lead many to righteousness. We thank You that You are the sovereign God, that You control history in every part. We give You glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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