

Revelation 13:11–15

A Ministry in the Word

Scripture Reading

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

Two Horns Like a Lamb — Speaking as a Dragon

The second beast rises from the earth — a more local, Palestinian character in contrast to the first beast rising from the sea of Gentile nations. He has two horns like a lamb, but speaks as a dragon. The two horns speak of power — and specifically of the two offices that the true Messiah will exercise in the millennium: priest upon His throne, and king. Zechariah 6:12-13 describes the Branch who shall sit and rule upon His throne and shall be a priest upon His throne. This second beast imitates those two offices — he is a king in Jerusalem, and he leads the false worship of the West. He appears with the lamb-like form of priesthood and kingship, but his voice reveals his source: the dragon.

1 John 2:22 captures the essential character abstractly: *he is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son*. Here in Revelation 13 we see the concrete manifestation of that denial — not in words perhaps, but in the meaning of all that is done. He denies the Father and the Son by directing worship to the dragon and the first beast. He is the false prophet, the mouthpiece of the whole false system. The gospel of the kingdom preached by the Jewish remnant says the true King is coming — this false prophet says the beast before him is the ruler and demands worship of him.

Exercising All the Power of the First Beast

Verse 12 says he exercises all the power of the first beast before him. That power came from the dragon (verse 2). So the second beast operates with the same satanic energy as the first — the same source, the same origin. He is the religious director of the western empire, causing those who dwell on the earth to worship the first beast. The religious centre is in Jerusalem, where he sits in the temple of God showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:4), and where the abomination that makes desolate stands in the holy place.

Darby's distinction between the first beast and the second was worked out in the 1840s, and it is important. Most dispensationalists have mistakenly identified the first beast as the Antichrist. But it is the second beast who is the Antichrist — the false Christ, the false prophet. The first beast is the head of the revived Roman Empire, the great political power of the West. The Antichrist is the religious figure who stands in Jerusalem and directs the worship of the whole western system toward the beast and toward the dragon behind him.

Lying Wonders — The Imitation of Elijah and Moses

The second beast makes fire come down from heaven in the sight of men. The echo of Elijah is deliberate — Elijah called fire from heaven on Mount Carmel to

vindicate the God of Israel against the prophets of Baal. Here the same kind of sign is performed, but it is called in 2 Thessalonians 2 a lying wonder. It is performed by satanic power for the opposite purpose — not to vindicate the God of Israel but to authenticate the false worship. The words used for these miracles in Scripture — signs, works of power, wonders — are the same words used for the miracles of the Lord Jesus. The enemy is always the imitator.

In Pharaoh's court the magicians duplicated some of Moses' signs until they reached the limit of what was possible for them, and then they confessed: *this is the finger of God*. Here, the lying wonders have no such limit imposed yet — they are permitted until the time appointed. And they will be enough to deceive those who have received not the love of the truth — those to whom God sends a working of error as a judicial act, just as Pharaoh was hardened. The Lord had warned Israel: *I have come in my Father's name and ye receive me not; another will come in his own name, and him ye will receive*. That reception is what this chapter describes.

The Image — An Abomination That Speaks

The making of the image and the giving of breath to it so that it speaks is the climax of the deception. An idol that is dumb is bad enough — the Psalms mock the idol that has a mouth but speaks not. But this image of the beast speaks, and speaks with authority: those who refuse to worship it are to be killed. This is what is called the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet — the abomination that stands in the holy place, protected by the beast power, making desolate because its presence brings the desolator upon the land.

The power to give breath to the image was given — Darby's translation makes that plain, as against the King James. It was not the Antichrist's own achievement. He is an agent of a higher satanic power, which is itself in imitation of the way the Holy Spirit is the power behind everything in the true divine order.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refusing to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's image are the Old Testament type of the remnant in that day who refuse to bow to this image: *We will not bow, and if we be cast into the furnace, so be it.* They will not worship it.

— *Study ends* —