

The Final False Prophet

Revelation 13:11-18

Pastor John Miller

I just want to read verse 11 of Revelation 13 to get us started. John the Apostle said, “Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.”

In Jesus’ Olivet Discourse, which covers Matthew 24 and 25, He was answering the question, “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” “Age” is “aiónios” in the Greek. Jesus said that there would be “false christs and false prophets...and [they would] show great signs and wonders.” Actually, in Matthew 24:24, Jesus summarized Revelation 13. The first beast that comes “out of the sea,” in Revelation 13:1, is the false christ or the Antichrist, and the second beast that comes “out of the earth,” in verse 11, is the false prophet.

So in Revelation 13, we are introduced to two beasts. The Antichrist is the political man who comes on the scene and will unify the world in a one-world government. There are several places in the Bible where this second beast, in verse 11, is called the false prophet. He is more of a religious leader who unites around the Antichrist with this one-world religion in the last days before Christ returns. Jesus predicted this in Matthew 24. This second beast, the false prophet, will be the personification of Satanic deception.

There are three things in chapter 13 about the false prophet I want to point out. The first is his person, in verse 11. He appears on the scene probably at the mid-point of the tribulation, and he is very prominent during the second half of the tribulation. He joins with the Antichrist during the first half but comes to his religious power during the second half of the tribulation.

In verse 11, John said, “Then I saw...”—so it is in the category of the vision John had on the island of Patmos—“...another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.” Notice here that John said “another beast.” The word “another” here means “another of the same kind.” So this beast that comes “out of the earth,” in verse 11, is of the same nature as the beast that comes “out of the sea,” in verse 1. The same Greek word for “beast,” in verse 11, is also used for “beast,” in verse 1. So these two beasts are closely related, and I believe, aligned with one another; they are a team. One is political and the other is a religious leader.

But these two beasts do differ. Their places of origin differ: the beast, in verse 1, comes “out of the sea,” and the beast, in verse 11, comes “out of the earth.” Some Greek scholars point out that the word “earth,” in verse 11, could be and perhaps should be translated “land.” The inference is that this second beast will come out of the “land” of Israel and would be Jewish in his ethnicity.

But we can’t be dogmatic about that; we’re reading about things that are future to us and after the rapture. So we don’t need to get bogged down with details that aren’t really clear in the

Scriptures. It's funny that some Christians like to leave the Bible and get into all this speculation about different people: who they are and where they're from. But when the Bible doesn't speak, it's best for us not to speak as well; just take the Word at what it says.

Notice, in verse 11, that this second beast had "two horns." In verse 1, the first beast had "seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name." So there is a lot of graphic detail about the first beast, in verse 1, that is different from the second beast, in verse 11.

"Horns," in Biblical symbolism, speaks of power or authority. It's possible that the first beast, with "ten horns," had more power politically, because these horns all had crowns on them, which speak of political power. They're called "diadems," so they were kingly crowns. But the second beast only has "two horns" and no crowns on them. Whenever you're looking at Bible prophecy, you need to pay attention to details, because many times people miss these points. So I believe that the second beast, having "two horns," means he has authority, but without the crowns, he doesn't have political power or political authority.

But what is significant, in verse 11, is that he looked "like a lamb" that had "two horns." This indicates that he is the religious leader of a false religion, a false spirituality, and is an ecumenical leader of all these different groups, bringing them together.

When we get to Revelation 17, we're going to see a woman riding a beast, which is called "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots." I believe that is the culmination of this religious leader's work in uniting the world under one banner, this ecumenical of one-world religion, and it is riding the Antichrist during the second half of the tribulation. But God will destroy this false religious system.

So this false prophet is aligned with the Antichrist, he doesn't have political power, he looks like a lamb, so he has religious power, but he "spoke like a dragon." "Grandma, what big teeth you have!" He is invested with power from Satan himself. His words are false and deceptive.

In Matthew 7:15, which is the end of His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."

Have you ever had someone knock on your door and say, "Hi, we're from the kingdom hall; we're Jehovah's Witnesses. We're Christians; we believe in Jesus. We have a Bible. We quote Scripture"? They have the same vocabulary but a different dictionary. They have a different Bible; it's not based on the Greek, and it's their own translation to promote their own false teaching.

They'll come to you. Notice Jesus said that you don't go to them; they'll come to you. A cult is on your doorstep. You need to be Biblically grounded and discerning as to the truth of God's Word. So Jesus warned us that they will come looking like sheep, maybe smelling like sheep, talking like sheep, acting like sheep, "but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."

So this beast “out of the earth” is actually the false prophet, who comes speaking “like a dragon,” even though he looks “like a lamb.” We must be careful.

You say, “Well, Pastor John, it doesn’t say ‘false prophet.’” But in Revelation 16:13, John says, “And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.”

It’s interesting that Satan is an imitator, so he tries to imitate the Trinity. We have the dragon, which is the anti-God the Father, a false God the Father; we have the first beast, of Revelation 13:1, which is the Antichrist, the imitation of God the Son; and we have the false prophet, the second beast from Revelation 13:11, which is the anti-Holy Spirit. So just as there is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, there is the dragon, the Antichrist and the false prophet. We will see that the false prophet does miracles and points people to worship the Antichrist. On the contrary, the work of the Holy Spirit is to point people to Jesus.

You can always tell if it’s a genuine work of the Spirit of God if it points people to Jesus Christ. Whenever a messenger is pointing to themselves, it’s not the work of the Holy Spirit. That’s a good way to determine the truth of an individual; if he aligns himself with the Word.

Notice this false prophet is a “beast” that comes “out of the earth.” I believe we are set up today for the appearing of this false prophet. In what ways do we see the stage being set for the appearing of the false prophet to come into the world? The Bible says that “In latter times, some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” There are several places in the New Testament where we, as the church, are warned that one of the signs of the end of times is apostasy in the church.

“Apostasy,” which means “a turning away,” is classically, and I believe rightfully defined as people who were not truly saved, who were not born again, who were not regenerated, who were not real Christians. But they were Christians in name only and come to the place where they don’t believe in Christianity anymore, they don’t believe the Bible is the Word of God anymore, they don’t believe Jesus is the only way anymore, they don’t believe that Jesus rose from the dead anymore. They deny all the doctrines of orthodox Christianity. Yet they still call themselves Christians.

We have seen in the last 50 years, at least in a radical way, that many of the mainstream denominations in America—and many independent churches, as well—turn away from the faith “once for all delivered to the saints.”

You better know what you believe and why you believe it. And it better be based on God’s Word. You need to be a Berean and search the Scriptures to see if these things are true. Don’t just say, “They’ve got a big church. They’ve got a good speaker. They’re charismatic. Aren’t they wonderful?!” What they teach needs to align with the Word of God. Paul wrote the book of Galatians to defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ against false teachers, who were deluding and perverting the Gospel of Christ.

It's so prevalent today that it's almost hard to find a church that still holds to orthodox Christianity, which starts, by the way, with a very high view of the Bible; that it is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, all-sufficient Word.

I believe in the inerrancy of Scripture; there are no errors in the Bible. I believe in the sufficiency of Scripture, the inspiration of Scripture. I believe it is the final authority for all faith and practice. The authority is not the church. The authority is not the pope. The authority is not the preacher. The authority is not church tradition or church history. It's not our intellect. It's not our own experience or our own emotion. It's the Bible, the Word of God. That's so very important.

People don't pick a church today because of its doctrine. They pick a church because they like it; it's appealing, it's exciting or it's great. That's all wonderful, but they have to be doctrinally, Biblically based, or we're sitting ducks for the false prophets, the wolves in sheep's clothing.

We also see today the rise in ecumenicalism. It started several years ago with the World Council of Churches. All these different churches got together and had a harmonic conversion. They thought everything was cool. They believed there is no absolute truth; your truth is your truth, and my truth is my truth. They thought we can harmonize and bring together all religions and faiths as one. This is what we are seeing today that will culminate in the time of the tribulation.

We also see the rise in pluralism. It is the philosophy that there is no absolute truth; one religion can't say that it's better than another religion, that you have the truth but they don't have the truth, or that you're right and they're wrong. When it comes to the very words of Jesus Himself where He says, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me," that's pretty clear. I've quoted that verse to people and some have said, "Well, that's just your interpretation." No; I'm quoting it. I'm not interpreting anything; that's what Jesus said! It means that it's either true or false. They say, "Oh, we don't believe those categories exist. Everybody's truth is true." That is self-contradictory. These people are so intolerant of the believer who takes a stand for the truth that is found in Jesus Christ. So we are being conditioned by the world today.

I hate to single her out, but Oprah Winfrey is one of the leaders in this pluralism and ecumenicalism and false spirituality. It is demonically energized spirituality. She says that "Jesus can't be the only way to God. All paths lead to God." So many listen to her false teachings.

So the world is being set for this false prophet to come on the scene.

The false prophet is a person; twice in verse 11, the personal pronoun "he" is used in the King James translation. Actually from verses 11-16 "he" or "him" is used nine times. So he is the personification of Satanic deception.

I want you to note, secondly, his power. We see the background for it in verses 12-15. "And he

exercises all the authority of the first beast...”—or “the Antichrist”—“...in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast...”—that goes back to verse 1—“...whose deadly wound was healed. He...”—the false prophet—“...performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”

I want you to note five facts about this false prophet's power. Number one, he is delegated authority or power from the Antichrist. And the Antichrist has received his power and authority from Satan himself, the “fiery, red dragon.” So the false prophet is aligned with the Antichrist.

Secondly, we notice that he causes the whole world to worship the beast or the Antichrist. As I mentioned, the Holy Spirit's job is to get people to worship Jesus Christ. So the false prophet's job, who is the anti-Holy Spirit, is to get people to worship the Antichrist, who is Satan's deception and imitation.

Thirdly, he performs powerful signs and wonders. Verse 13 says, “He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.” It's interesting that many times God would give His true prophets the ability to perform signs. The fact they perform “signs” means that they point to something. But not only do you have to have the miraculous; you have to have the message. And the message has to be from God and not from man's own origin.

Elijah called fire down from heaven. Perhaps he is one of the two witnesses alive at this time. The witnesses are actually given power to breathe fire and consume those who oppose them at this time. So this false prophet not only wants to imitate Elijah, but the two witnesses, and he calls fire to come down from heaven.

It's interesting that in the book of Job, when Satan attacked him and took out all of his animals and his livestock, it was done by fire coming down from heaven. It seems to be one of Satan's tricks. The point is that Satan has the power to imitate and perform supernatural miracles, so be careful that you're not deceived.

So you ask, “Well, what is my defense? How can I protect myself?” The answer is the Bible, the Word of God. It's “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” So your authority isn't that I saw it, I felt it, I heard it or I experienced it; your authority is the Bible, the Word of God. All experience must be submitted to the authority of Scripture.

But Satan certainly has power. When Moses went into the court of Pharaoh, he threw his rod on the floor and it became a snake. It was the power of God. But Pharaoh said, “No big deal; it's just a cheap, magician's trick.” He called his magicians in, and two magicians threw their

rods on the floor and they became snakes also. Moses might have thought, Oh, my. What am I going to do? But Moses' snake ate up their snakes. God's power is greater.

So my message to you is to be careful. As Christians, I don't believe we should be following or chasing after signs and wonders. I believe signs and wonders should follow believers, but we shouldn't be following them. We need to be grounded in God's Word, which is true and objective truth. The safeguard for us is God's Word.

The fourth fact, in verse 14, is that he deceives unseen earth dwellers. These "earth dwellers" are unbelievers, unsaved people. "And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast." These people are deceived by the false prophet's supernatural powers. They don't know the truth of God's Word. They don't love the Word of God. Since they're not believers, they don't have the Holy Spirit to give them spiritual discernment.

It's interesting that the word "deceives" here is where we get our word "planet" from the Greek translation. It has the idea "to wander" or "to lead astray," because we notice the planets are moving. So it means "to move away."

In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, in the New Living Translation, Paul says, "This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles." In the context, I believe he is referring to the Antichrist. But the Antichrist gives the false prophet his power and authority, as well. He works in alignment with the Antichrist. "He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them." So they rejected the truth of God and to love God's Word, and they will be led astray.

Notice fact five, in verses 14-15: he commits the "abomination of desolation." This was prophesied in Daniel 9:27. Verse 14 says, "...telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast..."—which is the Antichrist—"...who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath..."—it's questionable if he gave the image life, but he did give the appearance of breathing—"...to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed."

I believe we have the background in these two verses for what was prophesied in Daniel as the "abomination of desolation." This is when the Antichrist has erected an image of himself in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and the false prophet is instrumental in getting that erected. He commands the whole world to worship this image. He gives the image the appearance of having life and breath, being an animate object and being able to communicate. So the whole world comes and wonders and worships after the beast, this idol, this statue, that is erected in the rebuilt temple of the Jews on the mount. This is the desecration or abomination of that holy place.

Jesus mentioned this in Matthew 24:15 as one of the signs that will take place just before the

Second Coming. So this is yet future, happening in the middle of the tribulation. There will be three-and-a-half years before Christ returns. Jesus said, "When you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place...then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house."

It's also mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Paul says, "...who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." So here Paul explains what the "abomination of desolation" is. He sets up an image of himself, declares himself to be God and commands the whole world to bow down, and they began to worship him. If they don't worship this image, they are put to death.

So Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4 are classic passages on the "abomination of desolation."

There is an interesting story in Daniel 3 about King Nebuchadnezzar, who erects this giant statue of pure gold. In Daniel 2, he had a dream of a statue that just had a head of gold. It had a breast and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet and toes mingled with iron and clay. That image represented Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. When "the stone...cut out of the mountain without hands" from heaven struck the image, it crumbled. This stone cut from a mountain that went on forever is a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, crumbling or destroying the kingdoms of men and setting up His kingdom, which will be an everlasting kingdom.

Then in Daniel 3, King Nebuchadnezzar said, (I'm paraphrasing) "I'm not just a head of gold; I'm all gold. And my kingdom will continue; it won't come to an end." So in defiance to the God of heaven, he built a huge statue on the plain of Dura, all of gold, and commanded everyone to bow down and worship this image when the music sounded. All bowed when the music played except three Jewish boys, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. The King saw them and called them to him.

He asked them, "What are you doing?"

They answered, "Well, King, we're not going to bow down or worship your golden image. And if you do throw us into the fiery furnace, our God is able to deliver us."

So the King gets mad and heats up the furnace seven times hotter. Seven is an interesting Biblical number. There will be seven years of tribulation. Then the King gives them one more chance to obey him. But they still stood tall; they wouldn't bow, they wouldn't bend and they wouldn't burn, as we'll see.

Then the King had them thrown into the furnace, and the furnace was so hot that the men who threw them in were burned to death. The three Jewish boys were bound hand and foot when thrown into the furnace. But nothing burned but the ropes, so they walked around in the

furnace.

The King asked, "How many guys did we throw in there?"

His men said, "Three."

"Well, I see four, and the fourth is like the Son of God!" I believe that is what's called a "Christophany," where Christ, in his preincarnate glory, left heaven and came to earth to be with the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace.

When you're going through the fire, trials and difficulties, Jesus is with you.

The King had to actually tell them to come out of the furnace. If I were bound in ropes and cast into a furnace and didn't get burnt, I'd get out immediately. But when they came out of the furnace, they didn't even smell of smoke. Then the King had to acknowledge that there is a God in heaven, who had greater power than anything or anyone.

Don't ever be afraid of Satan's powers or devices. "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

Thirdly and lastly, let's look at his program, verses 16-18. What is the false prophet's purpose and plan? "He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave..."—that's just about every human being on planet earth; the earth becomes one—"...to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads..."—It's very specific where on the body these individuals are to be marked—"...and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." So anyone who doesn't have this mark can't buy, sell or go anywhere; they're stuck. "Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666." This number, 666, is commonly known as "the mark of the beast."

So the false prophet is not content to deceive people with miracles and idolatrous worship; he now commands them to receive a mark in order to control the economy. Remember that he is allied with the Antichrist, the political leader. The world has become one; there is a revived Roman Empire, so he has actually conquered the world. He has been given Satan's power, authority and seat. So now the Antichrist has this religious sidekick, the false prophet, his right-hand man. The false prophet gets all the religious world, through spiritual deception, to align with him.

Now people are commanded to worship the image of the Antichrist, the beast, that is erected in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. It's the "'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet." And Jesus warned us of it. They are commanded to worship this image and take his mark or be put to death.

Revelation 14:9-11 it tells us what will happen to those who take the mark of the beast. "Then a third angel followed them." The first angel is in Revelation 14:6-7, preaching "the everlasting

Gospel,” and the second angel is in verse 8, preaching that “Babylon is fallen.” Then this third angel was “saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.’” So this is telling us what will happen to those who take the mark of the beast and worship his image.

Now go back with me to Revelation 13:18. “Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the best, for it is the number of a man.” I believe that is the statement we need to hang on to. “His number is 666.”

There is a lot of confusion, craziness and bizarre speculation around the mark of the beast. What is the mark of the beast? When will the mark of the beast come? There are a lot of questions concerning this. I believe that this mark of the beast will be instituted by the false prophet, by the Antichrist, in the second half of the tribulation. And I do believe that the church, the true believers, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, will be raptured or “caught up...to meet the Lord in the air,” 1 Thessalonians 4:17, before the Antichrist, the first beast, shows up, before the false prophet shows up, before the “abomination of desolation” takes place and before the mark of the beast.

And if we are not raptured, we will not have the mark of the beast. I say that because some people are freaking out thinking that the Covid-19 vaccination is the mark of the beast. If that were true, then the church was not raptured, we'll be going through the tribulation and there should be angels flying around saying, “Don't take the mark of the beast. If you do, you're doomed.” That's not happening. So I don't believe the vaccine is the mark of the beast.

A lot of people try to figure out what the number 666 means. In the Greek and Hebrew, as in other ancient languages, letters had numeric value. All their alphabet had numeric value. So you could take a name and use the letters to add up the numbers in the name to see if it added up to 666.

So people have gotten so wrapped up in this that they've concluded that Hitler was the Antichrist, Caesar was the Antichrist, all the popes were thought to be the Antichrist. You can take any name that you want and if you work it enough, you can come up with 666. I think it's futile, foolish and a waste of time.

I don't know who the Antichrist will be, but I don't plan to be around to meet him anyway. I plan to be “caught up” to meet the real Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. That's who I'm looking for.

So yes, we see the stage is set for apostasy, ecumenicalism, pluralism and spiritism. It's been a freaky thing this past year with Covid-19. You can't come in unless you have a mask. Maybe

it will get to the point where you can't come in unless you're vaccinated, unless you have your special ID card. It's pretty freaky to go into a place of business and have them take your temperature.

But this is not the tribulation. We haven't missed the rapture. Jesus Christ is coming back for the church. That's the blessed hope we need to hang on to.

And try as hard as you will by studying 666, you're not going to figure out who the Antichrist is.

But it is interesting that 6 in Biblical numerology is the number of man. And the statement says in verse 18 that "It is the number of a man." Man was created on the sixth day. Number 7 is the number of perfection or completion. So the Antichrist is far short of being the true Messiah or Savior of the world.

You ask, "How do the Antichrist and the false prophet come to an end?" Revelation 19:20 happens at the Second Coming, when Jesus Christ returns. What does He do to the beast and the false prophet? It says, "Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two..."—that is, "the Antichrist and the false prophet"—"...were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone."

Jesus Christ will come again, and He will put an end to the beast from the sea, the Antichrist, and to the beast from the earth, the false prophet. And He will set up His kingdom, which is an everlasting kingdom. Then the dragon, Satan, will be bound for 1,000 years. And Christ will reign on the earth in righteousness.