

# REVELATION – SERMON 53

## *THE FALSE PROPHET*

Revelation 13:11-15

### INTRODUCTION

- In the 2016 census, 30% of Australians declared themselves to have "no religion"
- Man is an inherently religious being – created by God with the capacity to, and the purpose of worship
- Even the world acknowledges this instinct of man to worship
- “And I beheld” marks a new scene in the vision that began in 12:1
- Having described the first beast from the sea (13:1-10), the apostle John now details another beast which arises from the earth (13:11-18)
- This beast is elsewhere called the False Prophet (Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10)
- There are many false prophets referred to in the Bible (Matthew 7:15; 24:11,24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1)
- False teachers have been deceiving humanity from the beginning.
- The nation of Israel had to contend with many false prophets
- A significant part of the New Testament is devoted to correcting the errors of false teachers
- The union of political and religious leaders has been used effectively throughout history to exert power over others.
- Pharaoh and his magicians (Exodus 7); Balak and Balaam (Numbers 23); Ahab and Zedekiah and other false prophets (1 Kings 22); Nebuchadnezzar and his magicians (Daniel 2)
- There are many false prophets, but this individual is *the* False Prophet
- Just as the first beast is a man, so the second beast is an individual person (Revelation 19:20)
- This unholy triad is Satan’s imitation of the Trinity – the dragon corresponds to the Father; the Antichrist to the Son; the False Prophet to the Holy Ghost

- As the Holy Ghost points men to Christ and glorifies him, the False Prophet's mission is to make the world worship the beast

## I. HIS DERIVATION AND SAINTLY APPEARANCE (11)

### A. Another beast

1. This indicates another of the same kind

### B. Out of the earth

1. If the sea indicates Gentile nations, the *earth* may point to a Jewish origin of the False Prophet
2. The dragon's origin was heaven (12:7-9), the Antichrist from the sea (13:1), and the False Prophet from the earth – thereby encompassing the three physical realms
3. The ancients regarded the sea monsters as far more powerful than any terrestrial beasts – an indication of the inferiority of the second beast to the first
4. His spiritual origin is this world, whose wisdom is “earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:14-15)

### C. Two horns like a lamb

1. Horns indicate power, the Antichrist has ten (13:1), but the False Prophet only two
2. Two is the number of witness (Deuteronomy 19:15)
3. His lamblike appearance imitates Christ (5:6), and indicates a religious figure
4. Christ warned of “false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” (Matthew 7:15)

### D. Spake as a dragon

1. Speech reveals the true state of the heart (Matthew 12:34-35)
2. The dragon is Satan (12:9), and he speaks according to Satan's will
3. His speech is subtle (Genesis 3:1), lying (John 8:44), blasphemous (Isaiah 14:13-14), proud (1 Timothy 3:6), beguiling (2 Corinthians 11:3), deceiving (Revelation 12:9), seductive (1 Timothy 4:1), tempting (Matthew 4:3) and provoking to sin (1 Chronicles 21:1)

4. The nature of a dragon is fierce, destructive, fearless and proud – indicating the tenor of the False Prophet's speech

## **II. HIS DEMAND FOR SUBMISSION TO ANTICHRIST (12)**

### **A. His authority**

1. He exercises the power/authority of the first beast
2. He is the Antichrist's representative, acting as his prophet (cf. Aaron and Moses – Exodus 4:16; 7:1,9)

### **B. His role**

1. He works to cause the world to worship the Antichrist
2. This duo will represent the ultimate union of church and state with one world government and one world religion – the completion of the Tower of Babel

## **III. HIS DECEPTIVE SIGNS AND ABOMINATIONS (13-15)**

### **A. The wonders of the False Prophet**

1. "Wonders" is also translated "signs" and "miracles" (cf. v.14)
2. The devil is capable of performing miracles, particularly in order to deceive men (Exodus 7:11,22; 8:7)
3. One of these signs is to make fire come down from heaven (cf. Job 1:16)
4. This emulates Elijah's calling fire down from heaven (1 Kings 18:38-39; 2 Kings 1:10)
5. The False Prophet may style himself as the promised Elijah who prepares the way for his (false) messiah (Malachi 4:5-6)
6. He will also mimic the two witnesses, performing similar miracles to them (11:3)
7. The earth-dwellers will be deceived by these wonders
  - a. The horrors of the tribulation will drive the world to look for a leader who will give them hope
  - b. God himself will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11)
  - c. Yet they are damned because they "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:12)

8. Believers during the tribulation will not be deceived (Matthew 24:24-25)

B. The image of the beast

1. The False Prophet will lead a willing world to create an image of the beast for the purpose of worship (cf. Daniel 3:1-7)
2. He has power to give life to the image
3. Unlike any other dumb idol, this idol is able to speak (cf. Psalm 135:15-16)
4. This is the “abomination of desolation” – the idol set up in the holy place of the Jerusalem temple (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)
5. The image’s animation and speech may be attributed to modern robotic, artificial intelligence technology, but it is ultimately empowered by Satanic forces
6. As in the days of ancient Roman imperial cults, those who refuse to worship the image will be killed

## CONCLUSION

1. Even in our day, the world is ready to follow a man whose speech is transcendent and who can perform wonders
2. Many professing Christians today are eagerly seeking after signs and wonders, and are unwittingly preparing the way for the False Prophet
3. Christ said that many miracle workers will end up in hell (Matthew 7:22-23)
4. It is an evil and adulterous generation that seeks after signs (Matthew 12:39)
5. The New Testament repeatedly warns us to beware of false prophets/teachers (2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1)
6. The early churches were continually assaulted by false teachers, and in some cases, departed from the truth (eg. Galatians)
7. If we think we are immune from being deceived into error, we are in danger of falling (1 Corinthians 10:12)
8. We must seek God’s grace to “try the spirits” by the word of God (1 John 4:1); to be “rooted and built up in him, established in the faith” (Colossians 2:7); to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18); to “be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried

about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14); and to “hate every false way” (Psalm 119:128)