

The Death and Resurrection of the Beast - Part II

“Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

We are in the midst of examining biblical passages that use the same vocabulary of satanic miracles that are performed by the Antichrist (the beast of Revelation) and the false prophet during the Tribulation as was used of Christ's miracles at His First Advent. The same language is sometimes used to describe the miracles of the Antichrist that is used of the miracles of Jesus and His disciples. I believe that this supports the notion found in novels written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, that the Tribulation is a unique time in history in which God permits Satan to perform miracles as an evil-doer to deceive those who reject Christ's salvation.

Identical Language

Revelation 13 is a major chapter that deals with the beast (also known as the Antichrist) and the false prophet. This chapter reveals that the beast has a “fatal wound [that] was healed” (verse 3). The chapter also says that the false prophet “makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed” (verse 12); “He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men” (verse 13); “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, 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” (verse 14); “And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak” (verse 15).

The Greek phrase used in verses 3 and 12 describes the fatal wound to the beast. Is this to be understood, as John Walvoord suggests:

Another plausible explanation is that the final world ruler receives a wound, which normally would be fatal, but is miraculously healed by Satan. While the resurrection of a dead person seems to be beyond Satan's power, the healing of a wound would be possible for Satan, and this may be the explanation. The important point is that the final world ruler comes into power obviously supported by a supernatural and miraculous deliverance by Satan himself. 1

I do not think Walvoord's explanation does justice to the language in the passages.

I believe the text supports the actual death and resurrection of the beast, which is the view taken by Tim LaHaye in his novel. Gregory Harris explains: “In support of the view that this wound was fatal is the fact that identical language is used of Christ’s death and resurrection. Revelation 5:6 describes the Lamb ‘as if slain’ [hos esphagmenen], the same words used of the wound received by the beast (hos esphagmenen, 13:3).”² Because of this close similarity, Charles Ryrie concludes, “If Christ died actually, then it appears that this ruler will also actually die. But his wound would be healed, which can only mean restoration to life.”³ Non-futurist Leon Morris also believes that the clarity of the language is too high a hurdle for a non-literal interpreter to navigate. He says:

John’s interest is not in how the wound came to be inflicted, but in the fact that a wound, which appeared to be mortal was healed. He does not tell us how it was healed. He concentrates his attention on the fact that it was healed. Two points only receive emphasis: the deadliness of the wound (wounded unto death, and then his deadly wound) and the fact of recovery. The expression rendered ‘as if . . . wounded’ . . . was used of the Lamb in 5:6, and as the recovery of the beast is clear there may possibly be the thought of death followed by resurrection. This is one of several places in which the evil one is pictured as parodying Christianity.⁴

Furthermore, “the word referring to the beast’s return to life is similar to the word used of Christ’s return to life. Jesus is the One ‘who was dead and has come to life’ [ezesen] (2:8). And the beast will be the one ‘who had the wound of the sword and has come to life’ [ezesen] (13:14).”⁵

In support of this understanding is that Revelation 17:8, 11 refers to the beast that “was and is not.” “This may well refer to the wounding of the Antichrist in 13:3, 12, and 14. The phrase ‘is not’ refers to the physical death of the beast, followed by his ascent from the abyss (17:8), which refers to his return to life (13:14) and is the same as his reappearance as the eighth king of 17:11,” notes Harris. “The twofold reference to the beast going to destruction or perdition (17:8, 11) is the same as his eternal confinement in the lake of fire (19:20). The description of the beast in Revelation 17 likewise contains many similarities to the sword-wounded beast who was healed.”⁶ William Lee concludes: “The language is quite similar, the astonishment of the world’s inhabitants identical, and the threefold emphasis on this spectacular feature is repeated in both contexts (13:3, 12, 14; 17:8 bis, 11).”⁷

Scripture or one's Assumptions

Hank Hanegraaff said the following in his criticism of Tim La-Haye: “In a Christian worldview, only God has the power to raise the dead. If Antichrist could ‘raise [himself] from the dead’ and control ‘the earth and sky,’ Christianity would lose the basis for believing that Christ’s resurrection, vindicates His claim to deity.”⁸ However, as Robert Thomas notes, this is “a theological assumption, not an exegetical observation.”⁹ How can one legitimately conclude a priori, as Hanegraaff has done, that something taught in Scripture goes against a Christian worldview? The issue should be: “What does the Bible say?” Only after Scripture has taught us should we then formulate a Christian worldview. Theological assumptions should not precede exegesis of the Bible. If that approach is used, then one could declare almost anything to be part

of a proper Christian worldview and use such an assumption to argue against the actual teaching of the Bible. I think this is what Hanegraaff has done in this instance.

Those of us who agree with La-Haye's understanding of these matters do not necessarily believe Satan is the source of these miraculous events. In fact, I do not.

Second Thessalonians 2:11–12 states: “For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.” God enables Satan and his disciples to do these things in a similar way in which He would use any human instrument to work genuine miracles. Harris writes: “The possibility of the beast's return to life (with either God's sovereign permission or His active working) should not be readily ruled out. In other words, it is not impossible that the Antichrist should return to life because of the unique status of the Tribulation and the increased capacity of satanic power during that time, as well as God's broadening the parameters of what He will either permit or accomplish directly.”¹⁰

Historical Beliefs

In Hanegraaff's criticism of LaHaye, he appears to think that only a few extremist futurists, such as LaHaye would believe that the beast would be killed and come back to life.

Actually, this view has many more advocates throughout history than some might realize. I am not saying that the views people have taken on passages of the Bible make it right, but only that some significant ones have held a view similar to La-Haye.

It is interesting to realize that even Augustine believed like La-Haye on this matter (The City of God, Book XX, Chapter 19). Another ancient one who held views similar to LaHaye is Lactantius (early 300s) (Divine Institutes, Book VII, Chapter 17; Commentary on The Apocalypse, Chapter 13). More recent individuals include: Lewis Sperry Chafer, J. A. Seiss, Charles C. Ryrie, Leon Morris, Walter K. Price, Robert Govett and Robert Thomas.¹¹

Much more biblical and historical evidence could be provided to support LaHaye's views; however, this must suffice for the present. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

1 John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), p. 961.

2 Gregory H. Harris, “The Wound of the Beast in the Tribulation,” Bibliotheca Sacra (Oct.–Dec. 1999; vol. 156, no. 624), p. 466. The argument that I present in this article is primarily that made by Harris.

3 Charles C. Ryrie, Revelation, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1968), p. 83.

4 Leon Morris, The Revelation of St. John, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 167.

5 Harris, “Wound of the Beast,” p. 467.

6 Harris, “Wound of the Beast,” p. 467.

7 William Lee, “The Revelation of St. John,” in *The Holy Bible* (London: John Murray, 1881), Vol. 4, p. 789.

8 Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer, *The Last Disciple* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2004), p. 394.

9 Robert L. Thomas, “Exegetical Digest: Revelation 8–14” (n.p.: by the author, 1993), p. 280.

10 Harris, “Wound of the Beast,” p. 469.

11 For specific details concerning documentation of these advocates see Harris, “Wound of the Beast,” footnote 27.

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