

The Death and Resurrection of the Beast – Part I

“And I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; and they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” — Revelation 13:3–4

In their novel *The Indwelling*, Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins depict the beast of Revelation (also known as the Antichrist) as one who literally dies and comes back to life.¹ LaHaye and Jenkins present the events of Revelation 13 as a resurrection of the satanic beast. Is this really what the text of Scripture means? Perpetual critic of all things dispensational, Hank Hanegraaff, deems such a notion as preposterous. He states:

What is at stake here is nothing less than the deity and resurrection of Christ. 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. Further, if Satan possesses the creative power of God, this would subvert the postresurrection appearances of Christ in that Satan could have masqueraded as the resurrected Christ. Moreover, the notion that Satan can perform acts that are indistinguishable from genuine miracles suggests a dualistic worldview in which God and Satan are equal powers competing for dominance.²

Has Hanegraaff represented what Tim LaHaye actually believes? Well . . . yes and no! It is true that LaHaye believes the beast of Revelation will be killed and resurrected. “As far as I know,” declares LaHaye in his nonfiction commentary on Revelation, “this will be the first time that Satan has ever been able to raise the dead.”³ However, many of the conclusions Hanegraaff draws about this are not things that LaHaye believes; they are fabrications by the “Bible Answer Man.”

Hanegraaff's False Portrait

When reading the above quotation by Hanegraaff concerning LaHaye, it is clear that he has framed LaHaye’s belief about the resurrection of the beast during the Tribulation within a context that LaHaye does not believe. How are “the deity and resurrection of Christ” at stake within LaHaye’s understanding of the resurrection of the beast during the Tribulation? This is mere assertion on Hanegraaff’s part.

He has apparently made no effort to find out exactly what kind of theological framework LaHaye has in mind on this matter. LaHaye’s mindset is easily discovered by looking at his commentary on Revelation that has been in print since 1973. Far from the idea that “Satan possesses the creative power of God,” as propagandized by Hanegraaff, LaHaye speaks clearly on this matter as follows:

As far as I know, this will be the first time that Satan has ever been able to raise the dead. His power and control of man are limited by God, but according to His wise providence He will permit Satan on this one occasion to have the power to raise the dead. When studied in the light of 2 Thessalonians 2, it may well be the tool he will use to deceive men. 4

LaHaye clearly believes that the resurrection of the beast will be a one-time event under the sovereign control of God and in no way “suggests a dualistic worldview in which God and Satan are equal powers competing for dominance.” Hanegraaff erroneously presents LaHaye’s view as if he thinks Satan is autonomous and not under the sovereign thumb of our omnipotent God. It is obvious Hanegraaff disagrees with LaHaye’s futurist understanding of Revelation, but that does not justify his exaggeration of the implications of such a view with the effect that he greatly distorts and misrepresents the outworking of the literal approach to Revelation.

Why does Hanegraaff obfuscate and falsify LaHaye’s views? He claims “the point is to demonstrate the dangers inherent in the interpretive method they and other dispensationalists employ.” The problem does not lie in the dispensational interpretive method but in those like Hanegraaff who do not fairly represent the views of others. Perhaps he must exaggerate the implications of the views of others or it would not generate the concern he thinks appropriate if honestly presented. Amazingly, Hanegraaff quotes the famous maxim: “In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” So where is the liberty and charity in practice that he advocates in theory?⁵

Hanegraaff is concerned that if these satanic deeds were in fact genuine, then “Christianity would lose the basis for believing that Christ’s resurrection vindicates His claim to deity.” Gregory Harris argues just the opposite, since “exactly the same words used for the miracles of Christ and the apostles are used in reference to the miracles of the Tribulation.” He states: “To say that the signs, wonders, and mighty deeds attributed to Satan’s forces will only seem to be miraculous could lead to questioning the veracity of the miracles of Christ, since one could say that they too only seemed to be miraculous.”⁶ This would mean that if the satanic exploits of the Tribulation are not genuine miracles, but only sleight-of-hand, and, since these exact terms are the very ones used to describe the miracles of Christ and the apostles (more on this later), then one could also legitimately say that the miracles of Christ and His apostles are not genuine.

Parody or Reality?

Will the resurrection of the beast during the Tribulation really occur, or is it just a cheap trick? Hanegraaff says, “Satan can parody the work of Christ through ‘all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders’ (2 Thessalonians 2:9), but he cannot literally do what Christ did—namely, raise himself from the dead.”⁷ Many dispensationalists would agree with Hanegraaff’s notion that the satanic trio (the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet) does not perform actual miracles but only appears to do such through sleight-of-hand. Thus, it is wrong for Hanegraaff to present this as if all the dispensationalists are on one side of this issue, while all of the non-dispensationalists are on the other. Such is not the case. In fact, as I will demonstrate later, a significant number of non-dispensationalists down through the history of the Church agrees with LaHaye’s position.

I believe the “signs, wonders and miracles” done through satanic agency are indeed miraculous. Jesus (Matthew 24:4–5, 11, 24), Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:9), and John (Revelation 13:13–15; 16:13–14; 19:20) all describe miraculous works accomplished through Satan’s oversight with the very same language used of miracles performed by Jesus Himself, as I will show later. “Is it possible that God will grant for a limited time powers that up to now He has reserved for Himself and His select agents?” asks Harris. “Since the Tribulation is presented as unique from any previous time in history, should not unparalleled satanic power be expected, power he has previously been restrained from producing?” 8

The point is that God the Holy Spirit is now restraining “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:3) from certain activity during the current era (2 Thessalonians 2:6–7). Once the Holy Spirit steps aside, it will result in greater satanic activity during the Tribulation: “The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). In fact, Paul specifically writes of this activity during the Tribulation that it is something God will send (2 Thessalonians 2:10). The purpose is “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” (2 Thessalonians 2:10–11). Now, let us look at various reasons it appears that the beast of Revelation will rise from the dead and perform genuine miracles during the Tribulation.

Vocabulary

The primary language used to describe the miracles of Christ and the apostles are the terms “signs,” “wonders,” and “miracles.” The Greek word for sign is *semeion* and means “sign” or “distinguishing mark” by which something is known. It is used of miracles by Christ and the apostles in many passages (Matthew 12:38; 16:1, 4; Mark 8:11, 12; 16:17, 20; Luke 11:16, 29; 23:8; John 2:11, 18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 20; 7:31; 9:16; Acts 2:22, 43; 4:16, 30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12; Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4).⁹ This is the most common word used to describe the miraculous works of Christ and His apostles. Miracles in the New Testament are also referred to by the Greek word *teras*, which is translated into English as “a wonder, marvel.”¹⁰ The noun “wonder” occurs 16 times in the New Testament and is always coupled with the word “sign” (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; John 4:48; Acts 2:19, 22, 43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 7:36; 14:3; 15:12; Romans 15:19; 2 Corinthians 12:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Hebrews 2:4). All but 2 Thessalonians 2:9 describe the miracles by Christ and the apostles and notes “something so strange as to cause it to be ‘watched’ or ‘observed.’”¹¹

The remaining Greek words used of miracles are *dunamis* and *energeia*, which are usually translated as “miracle” and “working.” “Both point more to the supernatural source rather than to what is produced,”¹² concludes Harris. Other than 2 Thessalonians 2:9, these words always refer to “the workings of God.”¹³ Philip Edgcumbe Hughes ties it all together with the following statement:

It is best to take signs, wonders, and miracles as belonging together rather than as indicating three different forms of manifestation . . . Thus a sign, which is the word consistently used in the fourth Gospel for the miraculous works of Christ, indicates that the event is not an empty ostentation of power, but is significant in that, sign wise, it points beyond itself to the reality of

the mighty hand of God in operation. A wonder is an event, which because of its superhuman character, excites awe and amazement on the part of the beholder. A miracle (or literally power) emphasizes the dynamic character of the event, with particular regard to its outcome or effect. 14

Amazingly, the words just noted to express the miraculous work of Christ and the apostles are also the vocabulary used to describe “the miracles performed in the Tribulation by those in allegiance with Satan.”¹⁵ “Signs” are used of satanic miracles in the Tribulation (Revelation 13:13–14; 16:14) “and the same combination of words is used: great signs and wonders (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22), all power and signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9).”¹⁶ Of special note is 2 Thessalonians 2:9, which says the man of lawlessness is “the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders.” Sounds like the Bible is telling us these are miracles, similar to the ones done by our Lord. “The word *pseudos* (‘false’) has to do with the results of the miracles, not with their lack of genuineness or supernatural origin.”¹⁷ The language used by the inspired New Testament writers will not allow for a meaning that these satanic works are just sleight-of-hand magic tricks, as we shortly shall see. Maranatha! (To Be Continued...)

ENDNOTES

- 1 Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *The Indwelling: The Beast Takes Possession* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2000), pp. 366–67.
- 2 Hank Hanegraaff and Sigmund Brouwer, *The Last Disciple* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2004), p. 394.
- 3 Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Illustrated and Made Plain* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973, 1975), p. 180.
- 4 LaHaye, *Revelation*, p. 180.
- 5 Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Disciple*, p. 395. ThD Dissertation, 1998, Dallas Theological Seminary.
- 6 Gregory H. Harris, “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles in the Tribulation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July–Sept. 1999; vol. 156, no. 623), p. 317.
- 7 (Italics original) Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Disciple*, p. 394.
- 8 Harris, “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles,” p. 313. Gregory Harris has done a great deal of work on these matters and strongly concludes that these things are true miracles and not just magic tricks. See also Gregory H. Harris, “Satan’s Work as a Deceiver,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April–June 1999; vol. 156, no. 622), pp. 190–202; “The Wound of the Beast in the Tribulation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (Oct.–Dec. 1999; vol. 156, no. 624), pp. 459–468; “The Theme of Deception During the Tribulation,” ThD Dissertation, 1998, Dallas Theological Seminary.
- 9 William F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 755.
- 10 George Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd edition (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1937), p. 443.
- 11 Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 620.
- 12 Harris, “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles,” p. 310.
- 13 Harris, “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles,” p. 310.
- 14 Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 80–81.

15 Harris, “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles,” p. 311.

16 Harris, “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles,” p. 311.

17 Harris, “Satan’s Deceptive Miracles,” p. 311.