

Introduction

There are but a handful of genuinely new things introduced in Revelation which have no corresponding previous counterpart in Scripture, and delineating that the Antichrist is actually composed of two figures is one of them. All the obvious previous examples for 1st century believers to this point were lone, Gentile political rulers such as Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes IV and Caesar. And interestingly enough, all the counterfeit messiahs experienced both before and after Christ always seem to be lone, unaccompanied figures. But what they all share in common is the irresistible urge to deify themselves and seek to be worshiped. Politics and military conquest may be tools of the Antichrist and False Prophet, but there is no mistaking that it is all for the goal of engendering worship. First up, the east from the sea.

¹³And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. ¹⁴But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. ¹⁶But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. ¹⁷So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Read 12:13-17

Q: Who does Scripture specify is the dragon?

A: Rev. 12:9 plainly states his identity as the one “*who is called the devil and Satan*”.

Q: What is the difference between v.13-14 and 15-16 where Satan is concerned?

A: Whereas he first acts in the character of the dragon where persecution is his primary aim, he then acts in the character of the serpent where he primarily works deception. Revelation 12:9 specifically calls Satan both a dragon **and** a serpent.

Q: What is the difference between how Israel will endure these things vs. the Church?

A: Israel will flee into the wilderness and be protected by God’s divine intervention; the Church will overcome Satan by being faithful even to the point of death.

Point: *Satan’s tactics, even while he still had a place in heaven, have always primarily consisted of deception and persecution. When he and those who follow him into rebellion are cast out of heaven to the earth, deception and persecution are magnified to a level never before experienced by mankind, particularly God’s people. This is the very definition of what Scripture calls “the great tribulation”. (Mt. 24:21; Rev. 2:22; 7:14)*

¹And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore.

Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

Read verse 1

Q: Why is it significant that the beast is “coming up out of the sea”?

A: The sea is the repeated biblical metaphor for all the Gentile nations of the world. It is a clear scriptural indication that this first and primary Antichrist figure is an ethnic Gentile.

Q: Why would a 1st century Christian immediately recognize the truth of this?

A: Because to this point, because of the book of Daniel, all the Antichrist types known to this point from both Scripture and history have all been Gentile political figures. What John provides here is a confirmation of previous Scripture.

Q: Does this prevent him from having any kind of Jewish background?

A: No. For instance, Herod was accepted religiously as a Jew even though he was both ethnically Gentile and a citizen of Rome. He was accepted simultaneously as a Jew, Gentile and Roman.

Observation: Note the following scriptural parallels for the beast and dragon:

Daniel 7:7-8	Rev. 12:3	Rev. 13:1
<i>“...a fourth beast...and it had ten horns...and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots...”</i>	<i>“...a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his head were seven diadems.”</i>	<i>“...a beast...having ten horns and seven heads and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.”</i>

Q: What is common in each case?

A: There is a ten and a seven. In Daniel it is having three horns uprooted to leave seven, the dragon has only seven diadems for its ten horns while the beast maintains a diadem for each horn. This all seems to indicate something which begins as a ten but contracts to a seven, the other three being subdued or absorbed at some point.

Observation: In Daniel’s very first vision (Dan. 2), the kingdom of Antichrist is depicted as ten toes of “iron mixed with common clay” which is explained as being “a divided kingdom”. Part of the kingdom of Antichrist is subdued along the way.

Q: How is this a counterfeit of Christ?

A: When Christ returns we find “on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself”. (Rev. 19:12) The diadems on the beast are limited in number and the names on each head are “blasphemous”.

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Point: Biblical blasphemy is to slander God and bear false witness against Him. This feature of the beast leaves no doubt that he is in outward opposition to the Godhead.

Q: How might these slanderous names on each of the heads reveal something about the mark of the beast to come at the end of this chapter?

A: Taking the mark is an overt stance against God that involves slandering and bearing false witness against Him, the scriptural definition of “blasphemy”. We will see this overtly take place when at the end of the Bowl judgments it is recorded, “and men blasphemed God”. (Rev. 16:21)

Q: There are many suggestions as to the identity of the ten horns, which Scripture explains are “ten kings”. (Rev. 17:12-13) Why are probably none of them correct?

A: Because it is still too early to know; they do not exist yet.

¹²“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. ¹³These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

Revelation 17:12-13

They will not arise until just before the very end, and only for the purpose of serving the authority of the beast. They come into existence with the arrival of the Antichrist.

Point: The first beast comes in the character of Satan, both described as having seven heads and ten horns. The kingdom of Antichrist mimics this shared feature.

Read verse 2

Q: How were animals used in Daniel 7?

A: Four successive empires were associated, first the lion with Babylon, the bear with Media-Persia, the leopard with Greece, and a dreadful fourth beast with the kingdom of Antichrist.

Q: Why do you think the order of these same animals as shown to John is reversed?

A: Whereas Daniel was looking from the beginning toward the end, John is at the end looking back from the future when those three previous kingdoms have come and gone and all that is left is the kingdom of Antichrist. This also shows that all the characteristics of all the great earthly kingdoms are combined into the final kingdom of Antichrist.

Point: This is a clear scriptural connection to assist us in connecting the dots, so to speak, between Daniel and Revelation. John’s vision is built upon and fulfills Scripture which came before it rather than replacing it or invoking a new interpretation.

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²And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion.

And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

Q: What is significant about Satan giving the beast “his power and his throne and great authority”?

A: It shows who and what is really being worshiped, served and at work.

Point: *This is the fulfillment of what was initially provided in the book of Daniel, the final dreadful kingdom of the Antichrist.*

Read verses 3-4

³I 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; ⁴they 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?”

Observation: *This is the first of three mentions in this chapter of the beast’s wound. (v.3, 12 & 14) Twice it is referred to as a “fatal wound”.*

Q: What is the meaning of a “fatal wound”?

A: It speaks of something which inevitably leads to death.

Q: There is much speculation as to how this will come about. What does Scripture identify as the cause or method?

A: In v.14 Scripture states, “*the wound of the sword and has come to life*”. It comes about in the course of a military conflict or action.

Q: How is this verified in v.4?

A: As a result of his miraculous recovery his worshipers declare, “*...who is able to wage war with him?*” so as to lift him up as militarily invincible and impervious to death.

Q: What is probably the greater purpose behind this?

A: It is a satanic attempt to counterfeit Christ’s death and resurrection.

Q: But what is the real satanic goal here?

A: They do not merely follow the beast, but “*they worshiped the dragon...and they worshiped the beast*”. (v.4)

Q: Why might this sound familiar to us? How was this expressed directly between Satan and Christ?

A: In the course of Satan’s attempt to test Christ he “*showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give you, if you fall down and worship me.’*” (Mt. 4:8)

Q: How might the declaration, “Who is like the beast” be actually displaying yet another aspect of acting as a counterfeit?

A: There are many scriptural declarations, “*Who is like You?*” when referring to God. (Ex. 15:11; Ps. 35:10; 71:19; 89:8; 113:5) One of Satan’s chief ambitions is stated in Isaiah 14:14, “*I will make myself like the Most High*”.

Point: *This first beast may operate mainly in the political realm, but it is only to achieve the ultimate, spiritual result of being worshiped.*

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⁵There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. ⁶And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

Read verses 5-6

Q: How might these open acts of blasphemy against God's name and tabernacle in heaven be reflected here on earth?

A: He does the same by going into the earthly temple—the Abomination of Desolation, and doing the same by demanding to be worshiped and making his identity known.

Q: How would this all connect with the time limit of forty-two months?

A: Both Daniel and then Christ in the Olivet Discourse place the emphasis of the Last Days calendar on the last half of Daniel's 70th Week beginning with the Abomination of Desolation. A 3-1/2 span of years is comprised of 42 months.

Q: Why use "forty-two months" instead of "3-1/2 years" or even, as in the case of the Two Witnesses in chapter 11, "1,260 days"?

A: "42" is the biblical number for apostasy, the result of multiplying the number for perfection, "7", times the number for man, "6", to express the corruption taking place. Whereas "1,260" is used to refer to "good guys" such as Israel (Rev. 12:6) and the Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3), "42" is used for the bad guys such as the Gentile nations (Rev. 11:2) and Antichrist. (Rev. 13:5)

Observation: In Scripture, "42" as associated with apostasy is found:

- It was 42 apostate youth who were killed for mocking Elisha concerning the rapture of Elijah. (2 Ki. 2:24)
- It was the 42,000 apostate Benjamites who were expunged from Israel. (Jg. 12:6)
- The unfaithful generation prevented from entering the Promised Land stopped at 42 places in the wilderness. (Num. 33)

Point: Side-by-side with Satan's authority conveyed to Antichrist is a message of open blasphemy against God.

Read verses 7-8

Q: What is the primary purpose of the first beast's political power?

A: To persecute those who follow Christ and to obtain the worship of everyone else.

Q: How are those "who dwell on the earth" defined?

A: They worship Antichrist because their name is not found in the "book of life of the Lamb". In other words, they are unsaved.

Q: Why is the contention of some that it is possible to take the mark of the beast and still repent and be saved scripturally wrong?

A: Among other things, those who take the mark and worship the beast are absent from the book of life. Their earthly actions in taking the mark and worshiping the beast simply mirror their ultimate spiritual condition.

⁷It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. ⁸All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

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Point: Earth dwellers are differentiated from saints in that instead of worshipping “the Lamb who **has been slain**” (v.8), they worship the beast with “one of his heads **AS IF** it has been slain”. (v.3)

“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

Revelation 17:8

Application: The spiritual corollary to “you are what you eat” is “you are what you worship”.

⁹If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.

Read verses 9-10

Q: Why are some offended when the phrase is employed, “the rapture of the faithful”?

A: The offended are usually those who hold to Pre-Tribulationism who believe the Church will be removed before the appearance of the Antichrist, and therefore see this phrase as being exclusive and exclusionary.

Q: But why is it appropriate for those who accept Scripture at face value that the Antichrist must be experienced as well as at least part of Daniel’s final 70th Week?

A: Consider not just all the physical hardships of the Seal judgments, but the unprecedented deception, apostasy and persecution. By definition, the only Christians who will survive these circumstances without apostatizing are going to be “faithful”.

Point: When the Rapture takes place, all the nominal Christians will have been purged from the ranks and all that will remain are the faithful.

Summary of the First Beast

1st century believers reading John’s vision for the first time would have recognized this first beast as the Antichrist figure conforming to what was provided by the Prophet Daniel:

- He is mainly a political figure of Gentile ethnicity.
- His character and kingdom is a satanic reflection of a beast with seven heads and ten horns.
- His marking of blasphemous names reflects what he is doing in marking his followers.
- He is the last and final kingdom as originally designated by Daniel combining all who came before.

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- *Although he will experience what is normally a fatal wound in battle, Satan will effect a miraculous recovery in order to counterfeit Christ's death and resurrection.*
- *Although working primarily through thpolitical realm, his agenda is purely spiritual to obtain worship. Those who will not worship him will be pursued and persecuted to the point of death.*

Overall Application

The reason there is such an emphasis on the last half of Daniel's 70th Week, in this case the forty-two months, is that it is initiated by the Abomination of Desolation, and from that point forward Satan in every way is attempting to accomplish through the earthly Temple an imitation of what transpires in the heavenly.

Until Revelation 13, every Antichrist figure was a lone, Gentile ruler who self-deified and prefigured the final one to come. Now it is revealed that while these forerunners each taught something about the first Beast from the sea, there is a second figure equally Antichrist in the second Beast from the land.

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