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Thomas D. Ice

Liberty University, tdice@liberty.edu

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THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE BEAST

Tom's Perspectives

by Thomas Ice

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

And 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. And 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.

—2 Thessalonians 2:8–12

Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins in their novel *The Indwelling* 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 says:

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 post-resurrection 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 actually represented what Tim LaHaye essentially believes? Well, . . . yes and no! It is true that LaHaye believes that 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 that Hanegraaff draws about this are not things that LaHaye actually 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 is "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 is 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 that Satan is autonomous and not under the sovereign thumb of our omnipotent God. It is obvious that 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 outworkings of the literal approach to Revelation.

Why does Hanegraaff obfuscate and falsify LaHaye's views? He claims that, "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 they were honestly presented. Amazingly, Hanegraaff quotes the famous maxim: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity."⁵ So where is the liberty and charity in practice that he advocates in theory?

Hanegraaff is concerned that if these Satanic deeds are 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 says: "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 slight-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?

Is the resurrection of the beast during the tribulation something that actually occurs 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 There are many dispensationalists who would agree with Hanegraaff's notion that the satanic trio (the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet) do not perform actual miracles but only appear to do such through slight-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, there are a significant number of non-dispensationalists down through the history of the church who agree with LaHaye's position.

I believe that the "signs, wonders and miracles" done through Satanic agency are indeed miraculous. Jesus (Matt. 24:4–5, 11, 24), Paul (2 Thess. 2:9), and John (Rev. 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," explains 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 Thess. 2:3) from certain activity during the current era (2 Thess. 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 Thess. 2:9). In fact, Paul specifically says of this activity during the tribulation that it is something God will send (2 Thess. 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 Thess. 2:10–11). Now, let us look at various reasons why it appears that the Beast of Revelation will rise from the dead and do 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 (Matt. 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; Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 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" (Matt. 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; Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12; 2 Thess. 2:9; Heb. 2:4). All but 2 Thessalonians 2:9 describes the miracles done 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, signwise, it points beyond itself to the reality of the might 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 (Rev. 13:13–14; 16:14) “and the same combination of words is used: great signs and wonders (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22), all power and signs and wonder (2 Thess. 2:9).”¹⁶ Of special note is 2 Thessalonians 2:9, which says of the man of lawlessness that he 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 that 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 slight-of-hand magic tricks, as we shortly shall see.

Biblical passages that use the same exact vocabulary of satanic miracles that are preformed through 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 exact language is sometimes used to describe the miracles of Antichrist that is used of the miracles of the Jesus and His disciples. I believe that this fact supports the notion found in the novels of Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins that the tribulation in a unique time in history in which God permits Satan to do miracles as an evil doer to deceive those who are rejecting 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 tells us 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); “performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men” (verse 13); “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 “there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak” (verse 15).

The Greek phrase used in verses 3 and 12 that 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.¹⁸

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

I believe that the text supports the actual death and resurrection of the Beast, which is the view taken by Tim LaHaye in their 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)."¹⁹ 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."²⁰ Non-futurist, Leon Morris also believes that the clearness of the language is too high of a hurdle for a non-literal interpreter to navigate and 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.²¹

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 [*ezenen*]' (2:8). And the beast will be the one 'who had the wound of the sword and has come to life [*ezenen*]' (13:14)"²²

In support of this understanding is the fact that Revelation 17:8, 11 refers to the Beast which "was and is not." "This may well refer to the wounding of the Antichrist in 13:3, 12, and 14. The words 'is not' refer 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."²³ 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)."²⁴

SCRIPTURE OR ONE'S ASSUMPTIONS

Hank Hanegraaff said in his criticism of Tim LaHaye the following: "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."²⁵ However, as Robert Thomas notes, this is "a theological assumption, not an exegetical observation."²⁶ 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 that this is what Hanegraaff has done in this instance.

Those of us who agree with LaHaye's understanding of these matters do not necessarily believe that Satan is the source of these miraculous events. In fact, I do not. 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 says, "And 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." God is the one who 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 tells us, "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."²⁷

HISTORICAL BELIEFS

In Hanegraaff's criticism of LaHaye, he appears to think that only a few extremist futurist, such as LaHaye, would believe that the Beast will be killed and come back to life. Actually, this view has many more advocates down through 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 LaHaye.

It is interesting to realize that even Augustine believed like LaHaye 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.²⁸

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

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.

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.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Harris, "Wound of the Beast," p. 466. The argument that I present in this article is primarily that made by Harris.

²⁰ Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation, Everyman's Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), p. 83.

²¹ Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 167.

²² Harris, "Wound of the Beast," p. 467.

²³ Harris, "Wound of the Beast," p. 467.

²⁴ William Lee, "The Revelation of St. John," in *The Holy Bible* (London: John Murray, 1881), Vol. 4, p. 789.

²⁵ Hanegraaff and Brouwer, *The Last Disciple*, p. 394.

²⁶ Robert L. Thomas, "Exegetical Digest: Revelation 8–14" (n. p.: by the author, 1993), p. 280.

²⁷ Harris, "Wound of the Beast," p. 469.

²⁸ For specific details concerning documentation of these advocates see Harris, "Wound of the Beast," footnote 27.