

The Revelation Chapter 13:12-14 describes the power and spiritual influence that the **Lamb-like Beast from the Earth**, *Protestant America*, exhibits before the world. Recall from our prior study that the United States was founded upon the two principles of **Protestant Christianity** and **Republicanism**, both of which have been enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. However, the Bible foretells that these two principles in time will be forsaken, at which point the United States will speak as a *dragon*, a henchman of Satan. What was once a nation that upheld personal liberties, especially freedom of conscience (the freedom to practice religion), will become a tyrannical power. By deception and force, this nation will strive to control men's lives. Let us understand a critical definition before proceeding with our study.

Q: What does the term Protestant mean?

A: Protestantism is freedom of conscience: to exercise one's Christian faith based on the unalterable word of God, the Bible. Derived from the root word *protest*, the name Protestant is one taken by early reformers within the Church of Rome (A.D.1400-1700), who by studying the Bible, identified false practices and were morally led to oppose those heresies taught by the church. Unscriptural traditions taught for centuries held men in bondage- spiritually, intellectually, socially, and economically. Merely seeking to bring reform to the church and never to leave it, *Martin Luther*, a prominent reformer spoke out against 95 of the church's practices in A.D.1517. He was met, however, with the harshest reproof, excommunication, and ultimately

banishment. The reform-minded men and women who valued God and His Word more than the doctrines of men, began a movement called the **Protestant Reformation**. At its inception, the movement accepted the following creed:

1. **Sola Scriptura** - The Bible alone as the source of all truth (2 Tim 3:16, 17; Isaiah 8:20)
2. **Soli Deo Gloria** - Glory to God alone, not men (Matt 6:13)
3. **Sola Gratia** - God's gift of grace alone can save men (Eph 2:8, 9; Romans 5:14-16)
4. **Sola Fide** - Men are saved through faith, believing in, and living by, God's grace (Eph 2:8, 9; Heb 11:1-3, 6, 5:8, 9)
5. **Solus Christus** - Jesus Christ is man's only Source of forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and salvation (Romans 5:8-11, 19, 21; 1 John 1:5-10; Acts 4:12)

The United States was a nation originally in protest of the repressive doctrines of the papacy and the governments that backed it. Consider what the Bible says about the future of this once **Glorious Land** by reading Revelation 13:12.

Q: What is meant by the Beast from the Earth "exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him"?

A: Recall that the seven pagan kingdoms of the divided Roman Empire that converted to Catholicism became the military and civil arm, or **power**, of the papacy for over 1,260 years. These kingdoms ruled their subjects and went to war on behalf of the Bishops of Rome, seeking to subdue and control their enemies. Therefore, the Bible foretells that in time, the United States will be foremost in demonstrating

the military and policing influences once exerted by the seven kingdoms of Europe, on behalf of the Church of Rome.

When the United States becomes the military arm or power for the papacy, it is no longer *Protestant*, in protest of Popery. **Protestant America** would then have become the prophesied **False Prophet**. Let us consider the additional works of this nation as foretold by the Bible.

Q: What does it mean that the Beast from the Earth "causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast"?(v12)

A: Interestingly, the Bible uses the word "causeth" [causes] to describe the influence exerted upon the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast, the papacy. The word *cause* does not imply coercive force, but rather an influence more devilish, crafty **deception**. The Beast from the Earth, the United States, would be entirely co-opted to the papacy and a tool of the devil at this point in the prophetic description.

The Bible describes the workings of Satan through the Beast from the Sea as having "... all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness..." 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10. It is no marvel therefore, that the Beast from the Earth is said to do "*great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by [the means of] those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast*" (Revelation 13:13, 14). Without question, the Bible identifies Satan as the power behind the deceptive

miracles and great wonders. One such wonder described is **fire from heaven**. Fire from heaven is a recurring theme in the Bible and is most notable in the experience of Elijah the prophet on Mt. Carmel. Please read of Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 17, 18 for background on this important topic.

Q: What was "fire from heaven" to be a sign? See 2 Kings 1:10-15; 1 Kings 18:23, 24

A: Fire descending from heaven was a test to identify the true God; whether The Lord, the God of Israel is He or whether Baal, the god of the Phoenicians is the true God.

Q: What was the Prophet Elijah's desire in revealing the true God to the people of Israel? See 1 Kings 18:36-38

A: The prophet Elijah desired that God be glorified and that the people's hearts and worship be turned back to Him.

Consider a second manifestation of *fire from heaven* described in the book of Acts 2:1-18.

Q: How is fire from heaven described in this second instance?

A: The *spiritual fire from heaven* described in the Acts is the **baptism** [immersion or raining down] of God's Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The Holy Spirit's baptism bestowed *spiritual gifts* upon the recipients to empower the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:4-5, 8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The gift of tongues, the supernatural ability to communicate the gospel in the language of the listeners, therefore requiring no translation (1 Corinthians 14), was used to address crowds of men from foreign nations, gathered in Jerusalem to attend an annual Jewish festival.

Strange Fire

Revelation Chapter 13 – Part 4 [Based on verses 12-14]



Lesson 31

Let us look at one final example of fire from heaven in the following: Leviticus 9:23, 24, 10:1, 2, 8-11 and Numbers 3:4.

Q: *What made the fire offered by Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, strange fire?*

A: The fire used in the sanctuary services was to be consecrated, **holy fire**. This sacred fire was originally lit by God and was to be maintained throughout the daily services by the priests. Nadab and Abihu profaned God and their role as priests when they in *drunkenness*, presented censors with unconsecrated fire that they lit themselves, common, unholy, or **strange fire** (Ezekiel 22:26; Isaiah 5:20, 50:11).

The Beast from the Earth will be empowered by Satan to masquerade spiritual fire from heaven. Once used to prove the presence of the true God, the Beast from the Earth's fire from heaven in the near future will be used to deceive and manipulate those who dwell upon the earth. As Elijah the prophet sought to turn the hearts of the Children of Israel and their worship back to God, so the Beast from the Earth, as the *False Prophet* and through the papal inspired **Ecumenical Movement**, will perform signs and wonders to win the hearts of all men to the Beast from the Sea.

God has given His Holy Spirit to guide His church into all truth. The Holy Spirit abides in men who love God and keep His commandments (Acts 5:30-32). He also imparts His fruit in their lives so that they grow to reflect Jesus Christ in character and works (Galatians 5:22, 23). Prerequisites for receiving God's gifts and fruit are **repentance** and **conversion** (Acts 3:19). The Bible states, "*The law of the*

LORD [is] perfect, converting the soul" Psalm 19:7. Therefore, obedience to God's commandments is required for one to become a truly converted Christian. Satan however, teaches that God's gifts and blessings are fully available to men, even while willfully living in sin, transgressing God's moral law.

For every truth of God, Satan has created any number of counterfeits for deceiving men. As God empowers His church with *spiritual gifts* for spreading the gospel, Satan has cunningly devised counterfeit spiritual gifts, called **strange fire**. They give the appearance of the operations of God's Holy Spirit, but are the workings of demons upon the ones deceived. Satan and his fallen angels masterfully play upon men's senses and emotions using sensational, hypnotic orations, **charismatic** music and dancing, deceptive sleight of words, and captivating displays that create euphoric experiences. The bewitching causes an artificial high, a feeling of revival in those caught in the wily trap. Men and women are led to believe what they are told is intimacy with God and the presence of His Spirit. However, after the short-lived emotional high, they are left bereft of God's abiding peace and power over sin that only comes from receiving the Holy Spirit by faith. Genuine spiritual revival can only occur when there is first reformation, a turning to God with the whole heart, and heeding of His commandments (Acts 3:19, Mark 4:12, Romans 12:1, 2; John 1:12). Jesus gave warning of this fiendish work of the devil when He stated:

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if [it were]

possible, they shall deceive the very elect.. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, [he is] in the secret chambers; believe [it] not."

Matthew 24:23-26

To perfect the final deceptions upon men, literal fire from heaven will be called forth. That which God once forbade the lying prophets of Baal to manifest will be permitted Satan in the *Last Days* (Job 1:12-16). The tricks employed will be so persuasive that even those who are firmly grounded in faith could be deceived. Jesus strictly warned His followers not to expose themselves to the deceptions, lest they become ensnared. Further, Jesus advised that the signs and lying wonders of Satan would particularly deceive those "*that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*" 2 Thess 2:10-12 see also Isa 66:3, 4. Jesus fervently prayed that both His disciples and those who would accept Him through their witness, would be sanctified by the truth, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17-21). He also counseled, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32).

It is the Bible and God's commandments alone that serve as guides for avoiding Satan's snare, his *strange fire*. We need not enter into his temptations and be deceived while we walk in the light of Jesus Christ and His Word (John 8:12).