God's people must test spiritual claims by using God's Word, because impressive appearances and miraculous signs will lead people toward false worship

Revelation 13:1–10 describes the first beast's blasphemy, authority, and persecution

John introduces a second beast whose work explains another danger facing the saints, **deception**

To be deceived means **to be led into believing something false is true**. A deceived person may sincerely believe they are right—the problem is that **their confidence rests on a lie**

The **first beast** represents the Antichrist, and the **second beast** is the false prophet who promotes the worship of the first beast

Revelation 19:20 identifies the false prophet and describes his activities, e.g. performing signs and deceiving people into worship of the beast's image

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and He had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. Revelation 13:11 NKJV

John highlights the **contrast between** **appearance and speech**

The second beast **resembles a lamb**, but **his voice** reveals allegiance to **the dragon**

The lamb imagery reveals a **counterfeit Christ**

He had two horns - Horns commonly symbolize power in biblical visions

John does not identify these two horns as two particular nations, denominations, or offices

Likewise, coming from the earth does not establish the false prophet's nationality

The central contrast is clear: he appears trustworthy while communicating the dragon's deception

Speaking like a dragon does not mean a **frightening voice**

Deception can sound gracious, reasonable, and sometimes deeply religious

Matthew 7:15–20: Jesus warns about false prophets who appear as sheep but are inwardly ravenous wolves

2 Corinthians 11:13–15: False apostles disguise themselves as Christ's servants, just as Satan disguises himself as an angel of light

1 John 4:1–3: Believers must examine spiritual claims, especially what teachers confess about Jesus Christ. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world 1 John 4:1 NKJV

A phishing attempt: Its appearance earns your attention. What it requests reveals the danger

Similarly, a **teacher may use biblical vocabulary**, mention Jesus, and sound compassionate while asking people to **accept something contrary to what the Scripture teaches**

Examine the teaching beneath the presentation

Ask: Does this message accurately represent Jesus? Does he handle the Scripture in context? Did he encourage repentance, holiness, and love? Can the teaching withstand honest examination

A **religious appearance** cannot substitute for **biblical truth**

And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. Revelation 13:12 NKJV

False religion directs worship toward the wrong object

And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence

The second beast exercises the first beast's authority and directs the world to worship him. The healed wound becomes part of the appeal

The second beast's purpose is bigger than **spreading incorrect information**. He seeks to **redirect worship and allegiance**

The dragon empowers the first beast, and the second beast promotes worship of the first beast

Together they form a counterfeit arrangement that imitates divine authority

This comparison is useful, though Revelation **does not formally call them an unholy trinity**

John 16:13–14: The Holy Spirit guides into truth and glorifies Jesus

He uses spiritual or religious language as a means of securing loyalty to a human ruler

Acts 14:11–15: Paul and Barnabas reject worship directed toward themselves

Faithful servants direct attention **to God** and refuse the worship that belongs to Him

A church member **admires a gifted teacher or leader**

Over time, the leader's opinions become unquestionable. Any criticism is labeled rebellion against God, even when the criticism concerns clearly wrong teaching or wrongdoing

Respect has become unquestioned allegiance

This illustrates how religious influence can redirect devotion from God toward a person

Appreciate teachers and Godly leaders while keeping your allegiance anchored in Christ

No pastor, political leader, movement, or institution deserves the allegiance that belongs to God

He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13 NKJV

The second beast performs extraordinary signs, including bringing fire from heaven before witnesses. John describes a public display designed to persuade and deceive people

The fire recalls Elijah's ministry, particularly God's answer on Mount Carmel. Notice the difference between the false prophet, the beast, and Elijah. Elijah positions himself so that he points King Ahab and the people to the God of their fathers

And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. 1 Kings 18:36 NKJV

Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again 1 Kings 18:37 NKJV

Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench 1 Kings 18:38 NKJV

Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" 1 Kings 18: 39 NKJV

Verse 13 does not explain the mechanism behind the sign. Its emphasis falls on its deceptive use

Matthew 24:24: Jesus warns that false Christs and false prophets will use great signs and wonders to deceive

2 Thessalonians 2:9–12: Paul connects the lawless one's activity with Satan's power, deceptive wonders, and rejection of the truth

God does perform miracles, but supernatural claims require discernment

Someone says, I know this teaching is true because I felt something powerful, and the speaker knew something personal about me

The experience may have been **deeply moving**, but it does not settle whether **the teaching is true**

If the speaker then denies Christ's identity, excuses sin, or demands unquestioning obedience, leave the building, walk away!

And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived Revelation 13:14 NKJV

The signs persuade and deceive the earth's inhabitants to make an image of the beast

Miracles can be deceiving and Jesus said this would happen:

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Matthew 24:24 NKJV

The Old Testament has a warning about people who show up performing miraculous things

If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—'and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Deuteronomy 13:1–3 NKJV

We live in an age where miracles can be faked

Years ago a man named Peter Popoff deceived many people by pretending to hear from God about people in his miracle crusades. People found out he had a little receiver in his ear, and his wife was relaying information from people she had interviewed

The sad thing is that Popoff is back. People are still falling for his false teaching

Jesus pointed to the worship of the **One True Living God**

The false prophet will be pointing people to **worship the antichrist**

Their amazement of him becomes organized worship

Romans 1:25: Humanity **exchanges God's truth for a lie** and **worships the creature** instead of the **Creator**

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.1 Corinthians 10:14 NKJV - Paul commands believers to flee idolatry

These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Acts 17:11:

The Church examined the Scriptures **to evaluate what they heard**

Revelation 13:11–14 explains how **power**, **religious appearance**, and **spectacle** can work together to deceive

Grace, our greatest protection against deception, is staying close to Jesus, allowing His truth to shape our minds and His grace to shape our hearts

Discernment grows as we learn His Word, depend on His Spirit, and obey what He reveals

We cannot afford to **become confident** in our own **ability to recognize every lie**

We need Jesus Christ when deception looks convincing

We need Him when compromise feels reasonable

We need Him when fear makes another voice seem more trustworthy than His promises

We need Him in the ordinary decisions of Monday morning just as surely as we need Him in life's greatest trials

We need His truth to guide us, His mercy when we stumble, and His strength to remain faithful

With open hearts, let us confess together: Lord, I Need You