

The Antichrist Chapter 5 THE CAREER OF THE ANTICHRIST

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Transcript

The Antichrist

Chapter 5 THE CAREER OF THE ANTICHRIST.

We now come to the most interesting and yet the most difficult part of our subject. When will the Antichrist be manifested? where will he appear? what will he do? are questions which readily occur to all who have given any thought to the matter. It is not our purpose to seek to satisfy the idly curious, still less is it to gratify those who love the sensational. We are well aware that our present theme is one that appeals strongly to the curiously inclined, and were it not for the importance of our inquiry we would leave it alone. But without due regard to the person and place of the coming Superman, it is impossible to understand the eschatology of either the Old or New Testaments. The chief difficulty is to arrange in chronological sequence the many passages which treat of the Antichrist. It is by no means easy to discover the precise order in which the prophecies which deal with the Man of Sin will receive their fulfillment. There is great need for much prayerful study along this line. We can only write according to the light we now have, and our readers must examine for themselves what we say in the light of the Scriptures. It ill becomes any one to be dogmatic where the Word itself does not plainly state the exact time when certain prophecies are to be fulfilled. In this chapter we are placed somewhat at a disadvantage, because we shall be obliged to give brief expositions of many scriptures where it will be impossible for us to pause and furnish proofs or reasons for each interpretation. For example, it is our firm conviction that the Assyrian of Isaiah 10, the king of Babylon of Isaiah 14, the Little Horn of Daniel 7, the Little Horn of Daniel 8, and the first Beast of Revelation 13, each and all view the Antichrist himself in different relationships. There are some Bible students who may take issue with us on these points, and complain because that in this chapter we make assertions without endeavoring to prove them. We regret this, but would ask all to bear with us patiently. In the later chapters of this book we shall devote separate studies to the Antichrist in the Psalms, in the Prophets, in the Gospels and Epistles, and in the Apocalypse; when we shall endeavor to examine each passage separately and attempt to give scriptural proofs for every interpretation adopted. While it is admittedly difficult, and perhaps impossible, to fit each prophecy concerning the Antichrist into its proper chronological place, we are able to determine the relative position of most of them. The career of the Antichrist is divided into two distinct parts, and there is a clearly defined dividing line between them. In previous chapters we have pointed out how that the name "Antichrist" has a double meaning, signifying one who imitates Christ, and one who is opposed to Christ. This double meaning to his name corresponds

exactly with the two chief parts in his career. In the first, he poses as the true Christ, claiming to be indeed the Messiah of Israel. This claim will be backed up with the most imposing credentials, and all excepting God's elect will be deceived. He will sit in the Temple (a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem) showing himself forth to be God, and Divine honors will be paid him. But at a later stage he will throw off his mask, and appear in his true character as the opponent of Christ and the defier of God. Then, instead of befriending the Jews, he will turn against them and seek to exterminate them from the earth. Thus, with many of the scriptures which describe the person and career of the Antichrist it is a comparatively easy matter to decide whether they belong to the first or to the second stage of his history. But beyond this it is difficult, with some scriptures at least to go. We shall now consider, first the time of Antichrist's appearing. It is hardly necessary for us to enter into a lengthy argument to show that the Antichrist (as such) has not already appeared. Many antichrists have already come and gone, and some are in the world even now; the same is equally true of the many false prophets foretold in Scripture; but all of these are but the forecasts and foreshadowings of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, who are yet to be revealed, and who will receive their final overthrow by the Lord Jesus at His return to the earth. Before the Antichrist can appear the Holy Spirit must be "taken out of the way" (2 Thess. 2:7); the old Roman Empire must be revived and assume its final form—divided under ten kings—before the "Little Horn" comes into prominence (Dan. 7:24—he rises "after them"): Israel must be restored to their land and the Temple be rebuilt, etc., etc. At the present time the ultimate development of "the Mystery of Iniquity" is being hindered. God's people are the salt of the earth, and their presence here stays the corruption of the "carcass" (Matthew 24:28—The "Carcass" is the antithesis of the "Body" of Christ). The saints are the light of the world, and while they remain in it is impossible for darkness to cover the earth and gross darkness the people (Isa. 60:2). The Spirit of God is here, indwelling believers, and His holy presence checks the final outworking of Satan's plans. But when all believers of this dispensation have been "caught up to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16), and the Holy Spirit has departed from the earth, all restraint will be removed, and Satan will be allowed to bring forth his false christ, who will be "revealed in his time" (2 Thess. 2:6), and it would seem that even now signs are not wanting to show that God has already given permission to Satan to prepare the stage of action for the ghastly consummation of his evil efforts. There can be no doubt but that the Devil has desired to reveal the Son of Perdition long before this, so that by means of him he may reduce the whole world to submission. But the restraining hand of God, now so soon to be removed, has held him back. The time, then, when the Antichrist will be revealed is after this present Dispensation of Grace has run its course; after the Mystical Body of Christ has been completed; after the whole company of God's people have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air; after the Holy Spirit has departed from the world. How soon after we cannot say for certain. The majority of prophetic students seems to think that the last great Caesar will come into prominence almost immediately after the rapture of the saints. Personally, we believe there will be an interval, long or short, between the two. As there was a period of thirty years after the birth of the Lord Jesus—a period of silence—before His public ministry commenced, so there may be a similar interval between the Rapture and the Revelation of Antichrist. The Antichrist will enter the arena of public affairs before the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week, for at the beginning of it he makes a seven-years covenant with the Jews, then in their land. But at that point he will be the Dictator of the world's policies, and as he begins in comparative obscurity (at least from a governmental standpoint), some time—probably years—must be allowed for his gradual rise to political supremacy. His meteoric course will not be terminated until the Lord Himself descends to earth to usher in the Millennium. Just as the reign of Saul preceded that of David, so shall that of Antichrist antedate that of the true Christ. We turn now to consider the place of Antichrist's appearing. So far as the writer is aware there are only two scriptures which give direct information upon this point, and they are each found in the prophecy of Daniel.

We refer to the passages which speak of "the Little Horn." In Daniel 7:7,8 we read, "After this I saw in the night visions, and, behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and break in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn." This fourth Beast is the last world-empire, prior to the setting up of the Messianic kingdom. This empire will, at first, be ruled over by ten kings—the "ten horns" of Daniel 7:7 and defined as ten kings in Daniel 7:24. After them arises another, the "Little Horn," which signifies another "king", see Daniel 7:24. He is termed "little" because at that stage his kingdom is but small compared with that of the others, and the power he then wields is insignificant when contrasted from the ten kings. But not for long will he remain weak and insignificant. Soon the ten kings will themselves own allegiance to this eleventh—see Revelation 17:12, 13. We reserve for a later chapter the proofs that this "Little Horn" is the Antichrist, asking our readers to study carefully the description furnished of him in Daniel 7:8, 20-27; 8:9-12, 23-25. Taking it for granted (at the moment) that the Little Horn of Daniel 7 is the Antichrist let us see how what is there said of him helps us to determine the quarter from which he will arise. In Daniel 7:7 the "fourth Beast" is described, and in Daniel 7:23 we are told, "the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces." This Kingdom will be divided into ten parts, over which will be the ten kings (Dan. 7:24). This kingdom will be, we believe, the old Roman Empire revived in its final form, and divided into two great halves—the Eastern and the Western. This fourth kingdom will include within itself all the territory and will perpetuate all the dominant characteristics of the other three which have preceded it, i.e. the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and Grecian. Turning now to Daniel 7:8 we are told, "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn." The Antichrist, then, will have his rise within the limits of the old Roman Empire. This narrows considerably our circle of inquiry. The next question is, Can we determine from which part of the empire he will arise—the Eastern or the Western? Daniel 8 furnishes light upon this point. In Daniel 8:8,9 we read, "Therefore the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." Now Daniel 8:21 of this same chapter tells us, "The rough goat is the king (kingdom) of Grecia," and Daniel 8:22 informs us "and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms (or kings) shall stand up out of the nation." This, of course, refers to the act of Alexander the Great who divided his kingdom into four parts—Greece, Egypt, Syria, and the rest of the domains of Turkey—under his four great generals: Ptolemy, Cassander, Lysimachus, and Seleucus. This, again, very appreciably narrows our circle of inquiry. Daniel 7 tells us the Little Horn is to arise in a part of the territory covered by the old Roman Empire, which Empire gradually included within its domains that of the preceding empires. Now here in Daniel 8 we learn that the Little Horn will spring from that part of the revived Roman Empire which was included in the Grecian Empire. But this is not all that Daniel 8 tells us. The Grecian Empire is here viewed as disintegrated into four parts or kingdoms, from which of these parts, then, may we expect him to issue—Macedonia, Egypt, Syria, or Thrace? This question, we believe, receives answer in Daniel 8; where we are told, that the Little Horn "waxed exceeding great toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." Practically all students are agreed that "the south" here refers to Egypt, the "east" to Persia and Greece and "the pleasant land" to Palestine, hence it would seem that the country from which Antichrist will first be manifested is Syria. It will be noted that nothing is said in Daniel 8:9 about the Little Horn "waxing great" toward the north, and we believe the reason for this is because that is the quarter from whence he shall arise. This is confirmed by the fact that

"the king of Assyria" in Isaiah 10:12 is clearly none other than the Antichrist. We may say this was the current view of Christian writers on prophecy through the first ten centuries A.D. The late Mr. W. B. Newton in his splendid "Aids to the Study of Prophetic Inquiry" has succinctly summarized the various arguments of the ancients in the following language: "In the first place, as Nimrod—the founder of Babel, that is, the Tower of Babylon—a savage tyrant and cruel oppressor of men, was the first person who declared open war against God; so it is meet that there should arise from the selfsame Babylon, the last and most atrocious persecutor of the saints—the Antichrist. Moreover, seeing that Nebuchadnezzar and Antiochus Epiphanes—two monsters who bore down upon the people of God with an overwhelming power of destruction, and who were the antichrists of the old Testament and remarkable types of the Antichrist which is to come; seeing, I say, that these monarchs reigned in Babylon, it is fitting that the true Antichrist of the New Testament should arise from the same Babylon. "Besides, no place can be pointed out more meet for the nativity of Antichrist than Babylon, for it is the City of the Devil—always diametrically opposed to Jerusalem, which is deemed the City of God; the former city, that is, Babylon, being the mother and disseminator of every kind of confusion, idolatry, impiety—a vast sink of every foul pollution, crime, and iniquity—the first city in the world which cut itself off from the worship of the true God—which reared the city of universal vice,—which perpetually (according to the record of Holy Writ) carries on the mystery of iniquity, and bears imprinted on her brow the inscription of blasphemy against the name of God. The consummation, therefore, of impiety, which is to have its recapitulation in Antichrist, could not break forth from a more fitting place than Babylon." Having dwelt at some length on the time and the place of the Antichrist's appearing, we shall attempt to give now a brief outline of the leading events in his career. We have seen that the scriptures which help us to determine the direction from which he will arise, speak of him under the title of the Little Horn. Now the first thing this title denotes is that he is a king, king of Assyria. Some, no doubt, will wonder how a Jew will succeed in obtaining the throne of Syria. Several answers might be suggested, such, for example, as heading a successful rebellion—the spectacle of an obscure plebeian speedily rising to the rank of national Dictator, has been forcibly exhibited before our own eyes in Russia. But on this point we are not left to speculation. Daniel 11:21 tells us that the "Vile Person" will come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. With this agrees Revelation 6:2, where the Antichrist is seen riding a white war-horse, and with bow in hand, but with no arrow fitted to it. The symbol suggests bloodless victories. As soon as this Jew acquires the crown of Syria he will speedily enlarge his dominions. As Revelation 6:2 tells us, he will go forth "conquering and to conquer," and as we are told further in Habakkuk 2:5, "He is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlarged his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people." The first thing which is predicted of him (as "the Little Horn") is that "he shall subdue three kings" (Dan. 7:24). As to what kings these may be, appears to be intimated in Daniel 8:9 where we are told, "And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." He waxes great first toward the south, that is, most probably, by a victorious expedition into Egypt. Next, he is seen moving toward the east, reducing, to what extent we are not told, the dominions of Persia and Greece; finally he turns his face toward the pleasant land, which is Palestine. Without being dogmatic, we would suggest that the three kings he subdues are those of Egypt, Persia, and Greece. Having subdued the three kings by his military prowess a "league" is made with him (see Daniel 11:23). Probably it is the remaining seven kings of the revived Roman Empire, plus the three vassals of the Antichrist who take the place of the kings he had deposed, that enter into this League with the Little horn, or king of Assyria; but he shall work deceitfully, and shall become strong with a small people (Dan. 11:23). So strong does he become that in a short time he rises to political supremacy, and the whole of the ten kings shall "give their kingdom unto the Beast." (Rev. 17:17), and he will then be

recognized as the imperial Emperor. Thus as King of kings he will dictate the policies of Europe and Asia. "The Little Horn will revive in himself all the personified glory of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. And let not this be regarded as an event incredible. We are to remember that Antichrist will be Satan's masterpiece; furnished with every auxiliary of influence and wealth, for wresting the scepter from the hands of Him who won it by His humiliation of the Cross. Thus it is said he will 'resist the God of gods'. The accumulated and restored honors of each royal successor are thus to crown the brow of this last and greatest of Gentile monarchs. And so shall he stand in his unrivalled magnificence till the Stone shall smite him and his power, and grind all to powder" (Mrs. G. Needham). After the Antichrist has acquired the political sovereignty of the prophetic earth he will then enter upon his religious role, claiming to be the Christ of God and demanding Divine honors. At first sight it appears strange, if not incongruous, that a military despot should be found filling the character of a religious impostor. But history shows that there is a point at which one character readily merges into the other. Political ambition, intoxicated by success, finds it an easy step from self-glorification to self-deification, and the popular infatuation as easily passes from the abject adulation of the tyrant to the adoration of the god. Or again; a religious impostor, encouraged by the ascendancy he has acquired over the minds of men, grasps the scepter of secular power and becomes the most arbitrary of despots. Revelation 13:4 makes it plain that the military prowess of the Antichrist first induces men to render him Divine homage: "And they worshipped the Dragon which gave power unto the Beast: and they worshipped the Beast, saying, Who is like unto the Beast? who is able to make war with him?" But no ordinary honors will suffice him. His religious ambitions are as insatiable as his political, for he will "oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4). This claim to be God Himself, incarnate, will be backed up by imposing credentials, for his coming will be, "after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). These miracles will be no mere pretenses, but prodigies of power. The Jews, previously returned to Palestine, and with temple in Jerusalem rebuilt, will receive this Son of Perdition as their long-promised Messiah" (John 5:43). In imitation of the true Christ who will, at His return to the earth, "make a new covenant with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah" (Heb. 8:8, compare Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36), the Antichrist will make a covenant with the Jews (see Daniel 9:27 and 11:22). Under a seven years' treaty, and in the guise of friendship, he will gain ascendancy in Jerusalem, only later to throw off the mask and break the covenant. About seven months after the Antichrist, the "Prince" (i.e. of the Roman Empire) of Daniel 9:27 has made the Covenant with the Jews he will begin to "practice" in Jerusalem (Dan. 8:24). This we believe is the explanation of the two thousand three hundred days of Daniel 8:14 which has puzzled so many of the commentators. This two thousand three hundred days is the whole period during which the false messiah will practice in Jerusalem and have power over the "sanctuary:" two thousand three hundred days is seven years less seven months and ten days. There, in Jerusalem, he will pose as the Christ of God, the Prince of Peace. The world will suppose that the long looked- for Millennium has arrived. There will be every indication that the eagerly desired Golden Age has, at last, dawned. The great Powers of Europe and Asia will have been united under the ten-kingdomed Empire. It will be expected that the League of Nations guarantees the peace of the earth. For a season quietness and amity will prevail. None will dare to oppose the mighty Emperor. But not for long will the hideous war-spectre hide himself. Soon will the "white horse" of Revelation 6 be found to change his hue. A "red horse" will go forth, and then "peace shall be taken from the earth" (Rev. 6). At the very time the world is congratulating itself that all is well, and the slogan of the hour is "Peace and Safety," then "sudden destruction cometh upon them" (1 Thess. 5:3). In the midst of the seven years the Antichrist will throw off his mask, break his covenant with Israel, and stand forth as the most daring idolater who has ever trodden this earth. After he has "practiced"

in Jerusalem for two years and five months, he will take away the daily sacrifice (Dan. 8:11; 9:27) from the Temple, and in its place rear an image to himself in the holy place, which is the "abomination of desolation" referred to by Christ (see Matthew 24:15). This brings us to the great dividing line in his career, to which reference was made near the beginning of this chapter. It is a point not only of interest but of considerable importance to ascertain what it is that causes this startling change of front, from posing as the true Christ to that of the open defier of God. There are several scriptures which throw light on this point. Satan will cause the Man of Sin to crown his daring imitation of the Christ of God by being slain and rising again from the dead. Both the Old and the New Testaments refer to the death of the Antichrist, and attribute it to the sword. In Revelation 13:14 we read that the false Prophet shall say to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the Beast, which had the wound by the sword and did live. In harmony with this we read in Zechariah 11:17, "Woe to the Idol Shepherd that leaveth the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye." It is to be noted that before we read that "the sword shall be" upon him, we are told that he "leaveth the flock," and the previous verse tells us that he was raised up "in the land," which can only mean that he was ruling in Palestine. Hence it is clear that he leaves the Land before he receives his death wound by the sword. In perfect accord with this is what we read in Isaiah 37:6,7 (in a later chapter we shall treat at length of the future Babylon, restored; the connection of Antichrist with it, and the typical and prophetic significance of Isaiah 37 and 38); "Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." Leaving Palestine, the Antichrist will "return to his own land," that is, the land of his nativity—Assyria—which confirms what we have said previously about Assyria being the country where Antichrist will first be manifested. There, in his own land, he will fall by the sword. Most probably he will be slain there by his political enemies, envious of his power and chafing under his haughty autocracy. In death he will be hated and dishonored, and burial will be refused him. It is to this that Isaiah 14 (speaking of the King of Babylon, see v.4) refers: "But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit. As a carcass trodden under feed, thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people" (vv. 19,20). But his enemies will suddenly be filled with consternation and then admiration for to their amazement this one slain by the sword shall rise from the dead, and his deadly wound will be healed—note how this is implied in Isaiah 14, for v. 25 shows him once more in the land of the living, only to meet his final doom at the hands of the Lord Himself. It is to this amazing resurrection of the Antichrist that Revelation 13:3,4 refers: "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the Beast. And they worshipped the Dragon which gave power unto the Beast: saying, Who is like unto the Beast? who is able to make war with him?" Details of his resurrection are supplied in Revelation 9, from which we gather that just as Christ was raised from the dead by God the Father, so the Antichrist will be raised from the dead by his father the Devil, see v. 1 where the fallen "Star," which refers to Satan, is given the "key to the bottomless pit," and when this is happened there comes out of it the mysterious "locusts" whose king is the Destroyer (v. 11), the Antichrist. A further reference to the resurrection of the Antichrist, his coming forth from the Bottomless Pit, is found in Revelation 17:8: "The Beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the Bottomless Pit, and go into Perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the Beast that was, and is not, and yet is." It is to be noted that the earth-dwellers wonder when they behold the Beast that was (alive), and is not (now alive), and yet is (raised again). The world will then be presented with the spectacle of a man raised from the dead. All know him, for his career and amazing progress were eagerly watched; his wonderful achievements and military campaigns were the subject of daily interest; his

transcendent genius elicited their admiration. They had witnessed his death. They stood awe-struck, no doubt, at the downfall of this King of kings. And now he is made alive; his wound of death is healed; and the whole world wonders, and worships him. It is about this time, apparently, that the "False Prophet" (Rev. 13:11-16), the third person in the Trinity of Evil will appear on the scene. From a number of scriptures it is evident that the Antichrist will not spend all his time in Palestine during the last three and a half years of his career. It seems that shortly after the middle of the "week" the Beast will turn his face again toward Babylon, leaving the False Prophet to act as his vicegerent, compelling all in Jerusalem to worship the image of the Beast under pain of death (Rev. 13:15). It is to be noted that Habakkuk 2:5 tells us that the Antichrist is "a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlarged his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people." The reason for the Antichrist's return to Babylon is not far to seek. Having thrown off his mask of religious pretension, he now stands forth as the Defier of God. His first move now will be to blot out from the earth everything that bears His name. To accomplish this the Jewish race must be utterly exterminated, and to this end he will put forth all his power to banish Israel from the earth. He will make war with the saints (the Jewish saints) and prevail against them (Dan. 7:21; 8:24): this is the going forth of the "red horse" of Revelation 6:4. Those of the godly remnant who are left will "flee to the mountains" (Matthew 24:16), and there they will be hunted like partridges. It is then they will cry, "Keep not Thou silence, O God: hold not Thy peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, Thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate Thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (Ps. 83:1-4). Then, because many of the Jews will be found in that day dwelling in Babylon (see Jeremiah 50:8; 51:6, 45; Revelation 18:4) the Antichrist will go thither to wreak his vengeance upon them. But not for long will he be suffered to continue his blasphemous and bloody course. Soon will heaven respond to the cries of the faithful remnant of Israel, and terrible shall be the punishment meted out on their last enemy. This, however, must be left for consideration in our next chapter, when we shall treat of the last days and doom of the Antichrist.

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