

The Antichrist Chapter 7 ANTICHRIST IN THE PSALMS

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Transcript

The Antichrist

Chapter 7 ANTICHRIST IN THE PSALMS.

The references to the Man of Sin in the book of Psalms are, for the most part, more or less incidental ones. With rare exceptions he comes into view only as he is related to Israel, or as he affects their fortunes. One cannot appreciate the force of what is there said of him except as that is examined in the light of its prophetic setting. The time when the Antichrist will be in full power is during the Tribulation period, and it is not until we discover, by careful searching, which of the Psalms describe the Time of Jacob's trouble, that we know where to look for their last great Troubler. Politically and ecclesiastically the Antichrist may be viewed in a threefold connection, first, as he is related to the Gentile; second, as he is related to the apostate Jewish nation; third, as he is related to the godly Jewish Remnant, who separate themselves from their unbelieving brethren. More details are furnished us in the Psalms upon this third relationship than upon the other two, though we have occasional allusions to Antichrist's connections with the Gentiles and the Jewish nation as a whole. The second Psalm gives us a brief but vivid picture of that which will wind up the Tribulation period, and while the Antichrist is not directly named, yet the light which other scriptures throw upon it reveals the dreadful personality who heads the rebellion there described. This second Psalm is prophetic in its character and has, like most (if not all) prophecy, a double fulfillment. "Why do the heathens rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Ps. 2:1-3). A part of this passage is found quoted in Acts 4, but it is striking to note where the quotation ceases. Peter and John had been arraigned before the religious authorities of Israel, because that in the name of Jesus Christ they had healed an impotent man. The apostles boldly and faithfully vindicated themselves, and after being admonished and threatened were allowed to depart to their own company. Then it was that they "lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hath said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ" (Acts 4:24-26). Notice they quoted only the first two verses of Psalm 2, and this they did not say was now "fulfilled." What they did say was, "For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were

gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" (v. 28). In the apprehension of Christ and in His trials before the Jewish and Gentilish authorities, this prophecy through David had received a partial fulfillment, but its final one is yet future. The time when Psalm 2 is to receive its complete accomplishment is intimated in the middle section—it is just prior to the time when Christ returns to the earth as "King," and receives the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession; in other words, it is just before the dawn of the Millennium, namely, the end of the Tribulation period. As we re-read this second Psalm in the light of Revelation 16:14 and 19:19 we find that it depicts the final act in the blatant and defiant career of the last great Caesar. It is an act of insane desperation. The Son of Perdition will gather his forces and make a concerted effort to prevent the Christ of God entering into His earthly inheritance. This we believe is evident from the terms of the Psalm itself. The Psalm opens with an interrogation: "Why do the heathen (the Gentiles) rage (better, "tumultuously assemble"), and the people (Israel) imagine (meditate) a vain thing?" The fact that this is put in the form of a question is to arrest more quickly the reader's attention, and to emphasize the unthinkable impiety of what follows. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed." Notice that this rebellion is staged not only against the Lord but also against His "Anointed," that is, His Christ. The madness of this effort (headed by Antichrist) is intimated in Psalm 2:4: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." The futility of this movement is seen in Psalm 2:6: "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." The "yet" here has the force of "notwithstanding;" it shows the aim and the object which the insurrectionists had in view, namely, an attempt to prevent Christ returning to earth to set up His millennial kingdom. The response of heaven is noted in Psalm 2:5: "Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure." This is enlarged upon in Revelation 19:20,21. Psalm 2, then, brings us to the end of the Antichrist's history and treats only of the closing events in his awful career. In the other Psalms where he is in view earlier incidents are noted and his dealings with the Jews are described. The next Psalm in which the Antichrist appears is the fifth. This Psalm sets forth the petitions which the faithful Remnant of Israel will make to God during the Tribulation period. It would carry us beyond our present bounds to attempt anything like a complete exposition of this Psalm in the light of its prophetic application. We shall do little more than generalize. The Tribulation period is the time when Satan is given the freest rein, when lawlessness abounds, and when to the unbelieving heart it would seem that God had vacated His throne. But the eye of faith recognizes the fact that Jehovah is still ruling amid the armies of the heavens and among the inhabitants of the earth. Hence the force of the Divine title in Psalm 5:2—the remnant address Jehovah as "My King and my God." The most awful wickedness and rebellion is going on around them, but they are fully assured that God is quite able to cope with the situation. "The Wicked shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (vv. 5,6). The "Bloody and Deceitful Man" is plainly the Man of Sin. He is denominated "bloody" by virtue of his military ferocity; he is called "deceitful" because of his political duplicity. One after another of his opponents will fall before him: through a sea of blood will he advance to his imperial throne. Utterly unreliable will be his word, worthless his promises. A manifest incarnation of that one who is the father of the Lie will he be. Most completely will he deceive the Jews. A first, posing as their friend; later, standing as their arch-enemy. All doubt as to the identity of this Bloody and Deceitful Man" is removed by what is said of his mouth." From Psalm 5 we turn to Psalm 7 where we find the godly Jewish Remnant crying unto the Lord against their persecutors, chief of which is the Antichrist. This is clear from the first two verses, where the change from the plural to the singular number is very significant—"O Lord my God, in Thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me: Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver." The

Remnant plead their innocence before God and call down upon themselves the Enemy's curse if they have acted unjustly—"O Lord my God, If I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have requited him that did evil unto me, or spoiled mine adversary unto emptiness; Let the Enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it" (vv. 4-6, Jewish translation). This at once serves to identify the individual of Psalm 7:2 who would tear their souls like a lion" (not like a bear)—showing his kinship with that awful one who "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Observe, too, the word he "was at peace," but now "without cause is mine enemy." Clearly it is the Antichrist that is here in view, and, as manifested in the second half of Daniel's seventieth week, when he shall have thrown off his mask and stood forth revealed in all his dreadfulness. The twelfth verse goes on to say, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready." It is this which causes the Remnant to cry, "O Lord my God, in Thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me" (v. 1). The fourteenth verse unmistakably identifies this end-time Enemy of Israel, and again stamps him as a worthy son of the father of the Lie—"Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood." In the sixteenth verse the Remnant express their assurance of the certain fate of their Foe: "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate." The eighth Psalm is closely connected with the seventh. In the last verse of the seventh we hear the Remnant saying, "I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high." This anticipates the time when they shall be delivered from their awful Enemy, and when the glorious Millennium shall have dawned—"The Lord most high" is His distinctive millennial title. Psalm 8 follows this with a lovely millennial picture, when Jehovah will be worshipped because His name is then "excellent in all the earth." Then shall the Remnant say, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightiest still the Enemy and the Avenger" (v. 2). The Enemy and the Avenger, more literally "the Foe and the Revenger," are two of the many names of the Antichrist. Much in the ninth Psalm also anticipates millennial conditions and celebrates the overthrow of the Man of Sin. Sings the Remnant, "For Thou hast maintained my right and my cause; Thou satest in the throne judging right. Thou has rebuked the heathen, Thou hast destroyed the Wicked" (vv. 4,5). That the Wicked, or Lawless One, is the Antichrist, is clear from the next verse: "The destructions of the Enemy are come to a perpetual end: and their cities hast Thou destroyed." We hope to show in a later chapter that "their cities" which God will destroy are the cities of Antichrist and the False Prophet, namely, Babylon and Rome. Again; in verses 15,16 of this Psalm we read, "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth: the Wicked is snared in the work of his own hands!" This refers to the destruction of the Antichrist and his forces at Armageddon. In the tenth Psalm we have the fullest description of the Antichrist found in any of the Psalms. This Psalm is divided into four sections: first, the Cry of the Remnant (Ps. 10:1); second, the Character of the Antichrist (Ps. 10:2-11); third, the Cry of the Remnant renewed (Ps. 10:12-15); fourth, the Confidence of the Remnant (Ps. 10:16-18). In its opening verse we discover its dispensational key—the "Times of Trouble" (cf. Jeremiah 30:7) being the great Tribulation. Observe now what is here said of the Wicked One. In Psalm 10:2 we read, "The Wicked in his pride doth persecute (R. V. "hotly pursue") the poor." The "poor" (referred to in this Psalm seven times—Psalm 10:2, 8, 9, 9, 10, 14, and "humble" in Psalm 10:17 should be "poor"—emphasizing the completeness of their poverty) are the faithful Remnant who have refused to receive the mark of the Beast, and as the result are suffered to neither buy nor sell (see Revelation 13:17). In vv. 3,4 we are told, "For the Wicked (One) boasteth of his heart's desire, and curseth, yea, abhorreth the Lord (see Hebrew). The Wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: all his thoughts are—no God." This tells of his frightful impiety and reveals his satanic origin. In Psalm 10:6 his consuming egotism is depicted: "He hath said in his heart, I

shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity." Then follows a description of his awful wickedness: "His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity. He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor." Notice in this last verse the mention of "the secret places." It was to them our Lord referred in His Olivet Discourse, when He said, "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." This whole Psalm will well repay the most minute study. In the opening verse of the fourteenth Psalm we have what we doubt not is another reference to the Antichrist, here called "The Fool." He is the arch-fool, who, in his blatant defiance, says in his heart—"no God." The mark of identification is found in the marginal reading of Psalm 10:4: "All his thoughts are—"no God." Does not this title point out another contrast between Christ and the Antichrist: One is "the wonderful Counselor," the other is "the Fool"! In the seventeenth Psalm, which contains the confession of the Remnant, (pleading their innocency before God), reference is again made to the antichrist. "By the word of God's lips" will the believing Jews be "kept from the paths of the Destroyer." This is another of his titles which points a contrast: Christ is the Savior; Antichrist the Destroyer. That it is the Antichrist who is here in view is clear from what follows in vv. 12 and 13, where we read, "Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places. Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the Wicked, by Thy sword." The "Wicked" is here in the singular number. Note again the reference to the "secret places," about which we shall have something to say, in our exposition of Matthew 24, vv. 25, and 26 when we treat of the Antichrist in the Gospels. We pass over several Psalms which contain incidental allusions to the Wicked One and turn now to the thirty-sixth. The wording of the first verse is somewhat ambiguous, and we believe its force comes out better by rendering it, with the Sept., Syriac and Vulgate, "the transgression of the Wicked saith within his heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." He defies Jehovah and fears not Elohim. "For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful" (v. 2). Haughty conceit fills him, but in the end he shall reap as he has sown. "The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he hath left off to be wise, and to do good" (v. 3). This refers to his treacherous dealings with the Jews, and takes note of the two great stages in his career; first, when he poses as Israel's friend, later when he comes out in his true character as their enemy. Verse 4 describes his moral character: "he deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil." The thirty-seventh Psalm, which in its ultimate application has to do with the godly Remnant in the Tribulation period, contains a number of references to the Antichrist. In the seventh verse the Remnant is exhorted to "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (i.e. for His personal appearing) and to "fret not because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the Man who bringeth wicked devices to pass"—a manifest allusion to the Man of Sin. In the tenth verse they are assured, "for yet a little while, and the Wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." In vv. 12 and 13 we read, "the Wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at Him: for He seeth that his day is coming." This brings out the satanic malice of Antichrist against the people of God, and also marks the Lord's contempt for him as He beholds the swiftly approaching doom of this one who has so daringly defied Him. The end of the Wicked is noticed in Psalm 37:35. "I have seen the Wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." The whole of this wondrous Psalm calls for close study. It throws a flood of light on the experiences of the Remnant amid the awful trials of the end of the age. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the Wicked is before me" (Ps. 39:1). This sets forth the resolutions of the Remnant in view of the troublesome presence of the Wicked One; while in Psalm 39:8 they are seen praying that they may not be made the reproach of the Foolish One—"Deliver me from all my

transgressions: make me not the reproach of the Foolish." The forty-third Psalm opens with the plaintive supplications of the Remnant in view of the contempt and opposition of the Jewish nation as a whole, at the head of which will be the false Messiah: "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust Man. For Thou art the God of my strength: why dost Thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the Enemy?" The allusion to the deceit and injustice of the man of Sin views, of course, his breaking of the covenant. In the forty-fourth Psalm we are given to hear more of the bitter lamentations of the Remnant, betrayed as they have been by the one who posed as their benefactor, and scorned as they are by their fellow Jews: "Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people (Israel). My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face covered me, For the voices of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the Enemy and Avenger." The fiftieth Psalm is one of deep interest in this connection. It announces the response of Jehovah to the cries of His faithful people. It declares that "God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be tempestuous round about Him" (Ps. 50:3). It promises that He will gather His saints together unto Him (Ps. 50:5). It contains an expostulation with Israel as a whole (see Psalm 50:7-14). And then, after bidding His people call upon Him "in the Day of Trouble" and assuring them He will deliver them, God addresses their Enemy as follows:—"But unto the Wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest My words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son" (Ps. 50:16-22). First, God rebukes the Antichrist for his hypocrisy, referring to the time when, at the beginning of his career, he had (like Satan in tempting the Savior) come declaring God's statutes and taking the Divine Covenant in his mouth (Ps. 50:16). Second, He charges him with his treachery when, at the midst of the seventieth week, he had cast God's words behind him (Ps. 50:17). Third, He exposes his depravity and shows that he is altogether destitute of any moral sensibility (Ps. 50:18-20). Fourth, He reminds him of how he had congratulated himself that he should continue on his vile course with impunity and escape the due reward of his wickedness (Ps. 50:21). Finally, He announces the certainty of retribution and the fearful doom which awaits him (Ps. 50:22). The fifty-second continues and amplifies what has just been before us from the closing verses of the fiftieth Psalm. Here again the Antichrist is indicted by God—no doubt through the Remnant. "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy thee forever, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him: Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness" (Ps. 52:1-7). The pride, the enmity, the treachery, the moral corruption, and the vaunting of the incarnate Son of Perdition are all noticed and charged against him. The certainty of his doom, and his degradation before those he had persecuted, is graphically depicted. The prophetic application of the fifty-fifth Psalm first found its tragic realization in the treachery of Judas against the Lord Jesus, but its final accomplishment yet awaits a coming day. In it we may see a pathetic description of the heart-pangs of the Remnant, mourning over the duplicity of the mock Messiah. Driven out of Jerusalem, they bewail the awful wickedness now holding high carnival in the holy city: "Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from

him: But it was thou, a man mine equal (i.e. a Jew), my guide, and mine acquaintance" (Ps. 55:11-13). Thus will the Jews in a coming day be called upon to endure the bitter experience of betrayal and desertion by one whom they regarded as their friend. Concerning their Enemy the Remnant exclaim, "He hath put forth his hand against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords" (Ps. 55:20, 21). The reference is to the seven-year Treaty which the final Caesar makes with Palestine, and which after three and one half years is treated as a scrap of paper. But such treachery will not go unpunished. In the end Antichrist and his abettors will be summarily dealt with by the Judge of all the earth: "But Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Ps. 55:23). Psalm seventy-one contains another of the Remnant's prayers during the End-time. "Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the Wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel Man" (Ps. 71:4). The reference is, again, to the Man of Sin who has acted unjustly, and whose fiendish delight it will be to persecute the people of God. In Psalm seventy-two we find expressed the confidence of the Remnant. They are there seen anticipating that joyful time when God's King shall reign in righteousness. With glad assurance they exclaim: "He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgments. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills Thy righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the Oppressor" (Ps. 72:2-4). Mighty as their Enemy appeared in the eyes of men, and invincible as he was in his own estimation, when God's appointed time comes he shall be broken in pieces as easily as the chaff is removed by the on-blowing wind. The seventy-fourth Psalm makes reference to the violence of the Antichrist against the believing Remnant: "They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land. We see not our signs: there is no more any profit: neither is there any among us that knoweth how long. O God, how long shall the Adversary reproach? Shall the Enemy blaspheme Thy name forever?" (Ps. 74:8-10). This contemplates the time when the Man of Sin and his lieutenants will make a desperate effort to cut off Israel from the earth and abolish everything which bears the name of God. Note it does not say "all the synagogues" will be burned up, but the "synagogues of God," that is, where the true and living God is owned and worshipped. The eighty-third Psalm carries us to a point a little nearer the end. Not only will the synagogues of God be all destroyed, but an attempt will be made to exterminate those who still worship God in secret. Listen to the tragic pleadings of this Satan-hunted company, "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). As to who is responsible for this the verses following show. In Psalm 83:5 we read, "For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against Thee." Then will be realized man's dream of a League of Nations. It is remarkable that just ten nations are here named—see Psalm 83:6-8. "Assur" in Psalm 83:8 is "the Assyrian"—the Antichrist in his king-of-Babylon character. This verse is one of the few passages in the Psalms which shows the Antichrist in connection with the Gentiles. Psalm 110:6 also contains a reference to him as related to the Gentiles—"He hath stricken the Head over many countries" (R. V.). The one hundred and fortieth appears to be the last of the Psalms that takes note of the Antichrist. There we hear once more the piteous cries of the Remnant to God: "Deliver me, O Lord, from the Evil Man: preserve me from the Violent Man: Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the Wicked; preserve me from the Violent Man; who hath purposed to overthrow my goings...Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the Wicked: further not his wicked device" (Ps. 140:1, 4, 8). Thus we have glanced at no less than twenty Psalms in which allusion is made to the Antichrist. This by

no means exhausts the list; but sufficient has been noted to show what a prominent place is there given to this dreadful monster. Let it not be supposed that we are denying the present value and application of the Psalms to ourselves. Nothing is more foreign to our desire. We not only firmly believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is "profitable for doctrine," but we readily and gladly unite with the saints of all ages in turning to this precious portion of God's Word to provide us with language suited to express to God the varying emotions of our hearts. But while allowing fully the experimental and doctrinal value of the Psalter for us today, it needs to be pointed out that many of the Psalms have a prophetic significance, and will be used by another company of believers after the Church which is the body of Christ has been removed from these scenes of sin and suffering. We would urge those of our readers who are interested in dispensational truth to re-study these lyrics of David with a view of discovering how much they reveal of things to come.

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