

The Antichrist Chapter 9 THE ANTICHRIST IN THE GOSPELS AND EPISTLES

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

The Antichrist

Chapter 9 THE ANTICHRIST IN THE GOSPELS AND EPISTLES.

The Old and New Testaments have many things in common—far more than some teachers of "dispensational" truth seem to be aware of—but there are also some noticeable contrasts between them. Speaking generally, the one is principally prophetic; the other mainly didactic. There is far more said in the former about the future of Israel than there is in the latter. Much more space in the Old Testament than in the New is devoted to describing the conditions which shall obtain in the Tribulation period. And far more was revealed through the prophets about the Antichrist than was made known through the apostles. It is in full keeping with this that we find there is one book in the New Testament which is a noticeable exception, and that is the one which is peculiarly prophetic in its character and contents, namely, the Revelation. There, perhaps, more is told us concerning the person and career of the Man of Sin than in all the rest of the New Testament put together. The passages which refer directly to the Antichrist in the four Gospels are few in number; but in addition to these there are several indirect references to him, and these call for a more careful examination because of their apparent obscurity. The writer believes there may be other passages in the Gospels treating of the Man of Sin in his varied relations, and which contain an esoteric view of him, but which the Holy Spirit has not yet been pleased to reveal unto students of prophecy. Let not the reader then regard this chapter as in any-wise a complete or exhaustive treatment of the subject, rather let its brief hints bestir him to make prayerful and patient examination for himself. The Antichrist receives an even more scant notice in the Epistles than he does in the four Gospels. So far as we have been able to discover he is alluded to only in 2 Thessalonians 2 and in John's Epistles. The reason for this is not difficult to discover. The Epistles concern those who are members of the Body of Christ, and by the time the Antichrist appears upon the stage of human history, they shall be far above these scenes—with their blessed Lord in the Father's House. Nevertheless, "all Scripture" is profitable for our instruction and necessary for our enlightenment. God has been pleased to reveal much concerning those things which must shortly come to pass, and it may be that they who now ignore or neglect the study of the prophetic portions of Scripture will be overtaken by surprise when, in a coming day, they shall behold with wonder the fulfillment of prophecy; and possibly this surprise (due to culpable ignorance) is included in what the apostle refers to when he speaks of not being "ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28). Certainly it is our duty as well as privilege to examine diligently all that God has been pleased to make

known in His Word. 1. Passing by the typical teaching of Matthew 2, which will come before us in a later chapter, we turn first to Matthew 12 which is one of the most important chapters in that book, supplying as it does one of the principal keys to its dispensational interpretation. In it is recorded the first great break between the Jews and Christ, which eventually terminated in their crucifying Him. In Matthew 12:14 we read, "Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him." This is the first time we read of anything like this in Matthew's Gospel. Following this we read, "Then was brought unto Him one possessed with a demon, blind, and dumb; and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw" (Matthew 12:22). Up to that time this was by far the most remarkable miracle our Lord had performed. Its effect upon those who witnessed it was general and deep—"And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David?" (Matthew 12:23). It must be the long-promised Messiah who now stood in their midst. But the Pharisees were blinded by their hatred of Him, and committed the sin for which there is no forgiveness: "This fellow doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons" (Matthew 12:24). Then, following His reply to their awful blasphemy and terming them "a generation of vipers" (Matthew 12:34), our Lord uttered a prophetic parable which bears directly on our present theme: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matthew 12:43-45). The first thing to note concerning this mysterious and remarkable passage is its setting. This, as we have sought to indicate above, has to do with Christ's solemn pronouncement on those who had determined to destroy Him, and who were guilty of the unpardonable sin. In it He declares the judgment which God shall yet send upon apostate Israel. Our next concern is to ascertain the meaning of this parabolic utterance. The central figure is "The unclean spirit." This unclean spirit is viewed here in three connections: first, as indwelling a man; second, as going out of the man; third, as returning to the man and indwelling him again. In Matthew 12:44 the man is termed by the unclean spirit "my house." This man unquestionably represents Israel, for at the close of the parable Christ says, "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." Who, then, is referred to by "the unclean spirit"? We believe that it is the Son of Perdition. The following reasons lead us to this conclusion: First, mark attentively the use of the definite article: it is not simply an unclean spirit, but the unclean spirit. Second, note his threefold relation to Israel. At the time the Savior uttered these words the Son of Perdition was then present in Israel's midst. But a little later he was no longer so. When he hanged himself he passed out of these scenes into the next world; as Acts 1:25 compared with Revelation 11:7 tells us, into the Pit. His present state in the Abyss is graphically and solemnly depicted—"He walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none" (Matthew 12:43). Then, he says, "I will return into my house from whence I came out." This, we are satisfied, refers to the reincarnation of the Son of Perdition, when he appears on earth for the last time as the Man of Sin. Then, in a special sense, will Israel be his "house." A third reason why we believe "The Unclean Spirit" is the Son of Perdition is furnished by Zechariah 13:2—And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land." Clearly this verse speaks of the End-time. What follows is very striking. Zechariah 13:3 and 4 concern the prophets who shall prophesy falsely. But in Zechariah 13:5 there is a noticeable change from the plural to the singular number: "But he shall say, I am no prophet," etc. The only antecedent to this pronoun is "The Unclean Spirit" of Zechariah 13:2, which here in Zechariah 13:5 is shown to be no mere abstraction but a definite person. And then in Zechariah 13:6 the question is asked, "What are these wounds in thine

hands?" We believe this intimates that God will even permit the Man of Sin to imitate the Savior to the extent that he will appear with wounds in his hands: thus will he be the better able to pose as the true Christ. When the Son of Perdition returns to Israel, he finds his house "empty, swept, and garnished." This depicts the moral and spiritual state of the Jews at the time the Antichrist is manifested. Though clean from the horrible idolatries which defiled them of old, and though adorned with all that temporal prosperity will bring them, Israel, nevertheless, will be devoid of the Shekinah-glory, and have no Holy Spirit indwelling them. Next, we are told, "Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there." We believe that this has a double meaning. One plus seven equals eight and in Scripture eight signifies a new beginning. This is in keeping with the re-incarnation of the Son of Perdition. But we think there is also a reference here to Satan's blasphemous imitation of what we are told in Revelation 5:6, where we read of the Lamb having seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God." Just as the Christ of God will come back to earth endued with the Spirit of God in the sevenfold plentitude of His power, so will the Antichrist present himself to Israel in the sevenfold fullness of satanic power and uncleanness. Then, indeed, shall Israel's last state be worse than their first—i.e. when they rejected Christ in the days of Judas.

2. We turn now to Matthew 24, which contains a lengthy forecast concerning the end of this Age. Here we find our Lord describing the conditions which shall obtain during the Tribulation period. Christ announces with considerable detail those things which are to precede His own return to the earth. The whole chapter sets forth the Master's answers to three questions asked by His disciples, namely, as to when the Temple was to be destroyed, what was to be the sign of His coming, and of the end of the Age (see v.3). A similar, but by no means identical prophecy, is to be found in Luke 21. The main difference between them being that Luke 21 treats of conditions which obtained prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70—it is not until Luke 21:25 that the Tribulation period is reached; whereas the whole of Matthew 24 is yet future. It is striking to note that our Lord begins His prophecy by saying; "Take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in My name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4, 5). The significance of this appears by comparing Matthew 24:11, "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many." These false christs and false prophets are to head up in the Antichrist and the False Prophet, who will be the arch-deceivers. When we reach Matthew 24:15 a clear allusion is made to the Man of Sin: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, whoso readeth, let him understand." This reference of Christ to "the abomination of desolation" which is to "stand in the holy place," looks back to Daniel 12:11: "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." This, in turn, carries us back to Daniel 9:27: "And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate." With these verses should be compared Revelation 13:11-15, where we are told that the False Prophet who shall perform great wonders, will command men that "they should make an image to the beast." The False Prophet will have "power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the beast should be killed." By linking these scriptures together the following facts are brought out: First, an "image" is going to be made to the Antichrist (Rev. 13:15). Second, this "image" will "stand in the holy place" (Matthew 24:15), that is, in the re-built Temple at Jerusalem. Third, this "image" will possess supernatural power, for it shall be able to "speak" (Rev. 13:15). Fourth, this "image" unto the beast shall be an object of worship, and those who refuse to worship it shall be killed (Rev. 13:14,15). Fifth, this "image" is termed "abomination of desolation." The term "abomination" is an Old Testament expression connected with idolatry, and signifies some special idol or false god (see Deut. 7:26; 1 Kings 11:5-7). Sixth, this "abomination" or idol-god will be set up during the middle of

Daniel's seventieth week, or three and one half years from the end of Antichrist's career. This is clear from Daniel 12:11 and 9:27. The taking away of "the daily sacrifice" occurs when the Antichrist throws off his mask and stands forth as the Defier of heaven. In the re-built Temple of the Jews sacrifices shall once more be offered by them to God. These their King suffers, while he is posing as the Christ. But when he drops his religious pretensions and defies heaven as well as earth, the "sacrifices" will be taken away, and in their place worship to an image of himself will be substituted. Seventh, the setting up of this "image" to the Antichrist will, most probably, be attended with supernatural phenomenon. We gather this from Daniel 9:27, where we read, "And he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate." Now the word here translated "overspreading" is never so rendered elsewhere. Seventy times is this word translated "wing" or "wings." It is the word used of the wings of the cherubim in Exodus 25:20 and Ezekiel 10:5, etc. And in Psalm 18:10 we read of Jehovah that "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind." One profound Hebrew scholar has rendered the last clause of Daniel 9:27 as follows, "And upon the wing of abominations he shall come desolating." Remembering that "abomination" has reference to an idol or false god, the force would then be "upon the wing of a false god shall he come desolating." Now in view of Psalm 18:10 it is highly probable that Daniel 9:27 refers to a satanic imitation of the Chariot of the Cherubim. This is strengthened by 1 Corinthians 10:20—"The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God"—which shows the demoniacal nature of the "idols" or "abominations" worshipped. If this view be correct, then the Antichrist will be supernaturally borne aloft (in invisible demons), and apparently descending from on high (in blasphemous mimicry of Malachi 3:1) will finally persuade the world to worship him as God. The apostate Jews will, no doubt, believe that their eyes at last behold the long-awaited sign from heaven, and the return of the Glory to the Temple. For it is thither the false christ will be borne, and there his image set up. We believe that the words of 2 Thessalonians 2:4, "He as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that HE IS GOD" may, most likely, have reference to this same event. Coming back now to the words of Christ, Matthew 24:15 will, we trust, be much more intelligible. What our Lord there said was designed specially for the godly Jewish remnant who will be in Palestine during the Tribulation period. When the "abomination of desolation" is set up in the holy place, whoso readeth should "understand." How wondrously this agrees with other scriptures, and what a value it places upon the written Word! No supernatural revelation will be granted—these all ceased when the Cannon of Scripture closed. Then, as now, "understanding" is made dependent upon the reading of what God has revealed. What, then, is it that those godly Jews should "understand"? Why, that a crisis has been reached. That the Antichrist now stands fully revealed for the impious impostor that he is. And now that his career is clearly manifested, let them beware. Let them turn to Revelation 13:14,15, and they will discover that death awaits them should they tarry any longer in Jerusalem. Therefore, says Christ, "Let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him that is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house...for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:16-21). How marvelously one scripture throws light on another! How clearly does Revelation 13:14,15 explain the need for this hurried flight of the faithful remnant! There is one other reference to the Antichrist in this 24th chapter of Matthew, namely, in verses 23-26: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 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. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chamber; believe it not." The reference to the "great signs and wonders" is explained, at least in part, in Revelation 13. We have already seen that the False Prophet will have power to give "life" or "breath" unto the image of the Beast, so that

the image shall speak (v. 15). In addition, it is recorded how that "He doeth 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 those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast" (vv. 13,14). We had hoped to be able to say something further on the "secret chambers" of Matthew 24:26, but in the absence of any clear light from other scriptures, we refrain from speculations of our own. It seems plain, however, that the reference is to the occult powers and activities of the Wicked One, who ever loveth darkness rather than light.

3. Our next passage will be the first eight verses of Luke 18, where in a parable the Lord gives us another view of the Antichrist: "And He spake a parable unto them, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for awhile: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this woman troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Like many of Christ's parables, this one is plainly prophetic in its character. It looks forward to a coming day: it treats of conditions which are to obtain during the Tribulation period. This is easily seen from the context. Luke 18 opens with the word "and," and the last eighteen verses of the previous chapter, with which the 18th is thus connected, treat of those things which are to immediately precede the establishing of the Messiah's Kingdom—note particularly Luke 18:26. So, too, the closing words of the parable now before us read, "When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?" Having thus pointed out the time when this prophetic parable is to receive its fulfillment, our next concern is to ascertain the significance of its terms. The parable revolves around a "widow" and an "unjust judge." Once we discover who are represented by these, everything will be simple. Our task ought not to be difficult seeing that we have already learned the time when these characters are to appear. The "widow" in Scripture is ever the figure of desolation, loneliness, weakness. Dispensationally, Israel is the widow, spiritually dead as she now is to her Divine Husband. Here in the parable of Luke 18 it is the new Israel, the "Israel of God," the faithful remnant, which is in view. To quote one scripture is sufficient to establish this: "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a widow forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercy will I gather thee" (Isa. 54:4-7). These are the words which Christ will speak to the remnant right at the beginning of the Millennium, after they have made Isaiah 53 their own repentant confession. In the chapter on the Antichrist in the Psalms attention was repeatedly directed to passages which treat of the condition of the godly Jewish remnant during the Tribulation period. We saw that their lot is to be a bitter one. Severe will be their testings; terrible their sufferings. Not the least painful of their experiences will be the fierce opposition of their unbelieving brethren. Just as the worst enemies of the Savior were found among His brethren according to the flesh, and just as the most relentless persecutors of the saints during this dispensation have been those who professed to be the followers of Christ, so the most merciless foes of the Jewish remnant will be the unbelieving portion of their own nation. These, too, are noticed in our parable: "they are the "adversary" against which the "widow" appeals to the "Judge"—"Avenge me of mine adversary" is her plea. In the light of what has been said above it is easy to discover who is represented by the one to whom the "widow" appeals—appeals no doubt some little time before the end of the Tribulation period is

reached. Clearly it is the Antichrist himself, and what is here said of him establishes this beyond a reasonable doubt. First, he is termed "a Judge," so that he is viewed as being in the position of authority: we may add, it is the same word as rendered "Judge" in James 5:9 which speaks of the Lord Jesus. Second, he is represented as being located in a certain "city:" whether this is Jerusalem or Babylon, we cannot say; but we rather think it is the latter. In the third place, it is said of this Judge that he "feared not God, neither regarded man." We need not tarry to point out how fully this accords with what is elsewhere said of the Man of Sin. Godlessness and lawlessness are the two most prominent elements in his character. In the fourth place, the Lord specifically terms him "the unjust Judge" (James 5:6). The word signifies "unrighteousness." This word points an antithesis between him and the true Christ who shall reign in righteousness. In the fifth place, his callousness is noted in the words, "and he would not for awhile" (James 5:4). The Greek verb of James 5:3 signifies that the widow came to this "Judge" again and again. But in his hard-heartedness he repeatedly turned a deaf ear to her entreaties. Such will be the brutal indifference of the Antichrist to the sufferings of the faithful Jews. In the sixth place, his untruthfulness and treachery are clearly implied. In 5:5 this unjust Judge is represented as saying, "Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her," etc.; but that he fails to keep his word is clear from what we read in the seventh verse—"Shall not God avenge His own elect?" etc. The Antichrist does not avenge him, but God will. Finally, his doom is hinted at in the words last quoted. When God "avenges" the elect remnant the Antichrist will be destroyed together with those of his followers who had persecuted them. There is only one difficulty in the way of the above interpretation and that is the appeal of the Jewish remnant to the Antichrist. Can it be possible that they should seek help from him! But is there any real difficulty in this? Let us consult our own experience for answer. How often, in the hour of trial, do we turn to the arm of flesh for relief! Even the Apostle Paul appealed to Caesar! But lest this be thought an invention of ours to meet a pertinent objections against the interpretation advanced above, note carefully the wording of the seventh verse: "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?" Do not the words "bear long with them" intimate that though they had cried unto God day and night, yet they had also sought help from some one else. Even clearer is the testimony of Isaiah 10:20—"And it shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall upon the Lord"! 4. I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). This scripture has already been before us (see chapter three 15) so it need not detain us long. It speaks of the Antichrist in connection with unbelieving Israel. It draws a double contrast between the Son of god and the Son of Perdition. The Christ of God, in lowly condescension, came not in His own name, but in that of His Father—in perfect subjection; but the christ of Satan, in lofty arrogance, shall come in his own name. This will at once appeal to the corrupt hearts of fallen men. The very meekness of the Lord Jesus was an offense to the Jews; but the pride and egotism of the Man of Sin will make him acceptable to them. By the apostate Nation Christ was not received. As we read in this same Gospel, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). But the Antichrist shall be welcomed by them—"him ye will receive," says the Lord. They will receive him as their long-expected Messiah. They will receive him as their king. They will receive him as the promised Deliverer. His yoke will be accepted. Divine honors will be paid him. But bitterly will they rue it; and terrible will be God's judgment upon them. 5. "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh the Lie, he speaketh of his own (son): for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). The Greek word for "lie" is "pseudos." It occurs in the New Testament just nine times—the number of judgment. I always has reference to that which is opposed to the truth. It is a fit appellation for the Antichrist, who is the son of him

who is the Arch-liar, the Devil. The Christ of God is "The Truth;" the christ of Satan, "The Lie." That this is one of the many names of the Man of Sin is clear from 2 Thessalonians 2. There we are told that his coming is "after the working of Satan will all power and signs and lying wonders and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Then we are told, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe the Lie (cf. 3:11). Upon John 8:44 we cannot do better than quote from Sir Robert Anderson: "To speak a lie is not English. In our language the proper expression is "to tell a lie." But no one would so render the Greek words here. It is not the false in the abstract which is in view, but a concrete instance of it. And thus the connection is clear between Satan the liar and Satan the murderer. He is not the instigator of all murders, but of the murder, there and then in question, the murder of the Christ; he is not the father of lies, but the father of the Lie. In 2 Thessalonians 2:11 it is again the Lie of John 8:44. God does not incite men to tell lies or to believe lies. But of those who reject the truth, it is written, "He shall send them strong delusion that they should believe the Lie. Because they have rejected the Christ of God, a judicial blindness shall fall upon them that they should accept the Christ of humanity, who will be Satan incarnate" (The Silence of God). 6. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the Son of Perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:5). That our Lord was referring to the Antichrist is unequivocally established by 2 Thessalonians 2:3, where the Man of Sin is denominated "the Son of Perdition." That Judas, here termed the Son of Perdition, was more than a man is clear from John 6:70 where we read, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a Devil?" In no other passage is the word "Diabolos" applied to anyone but Satan himself. Just as the Lord Jesus was God incarnate, so will Judas be the Devil incarnate; and, as we have shown in chapter three (third main section) Judas will be re-incarnated in the Antichrist. Perhaps one other should be said on John 17:12 before we pass from it. Some have thought that this verse weakens the doctrine of the absolute security of the saints, but in act it does nothing of the kind. Notice Christ did not say, "Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost except the Son of Perdition," instead, He said, "None of them is lost but the Son of Perdition." The word "but" is used adversatively, not exceptively; that is to say, Judas is here opposed to those that were given to Christ (for other scriptures with a similar construction see Matthew 12:4, Acts 27:22, Revelation 21:27). This interpretation is unequivocally established by John 18:9—"Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none." 7. 2 Thessalonians 2 contains the chief passage in the Epistles concerning the Antichrist. Here he is denominated "that Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition" (v. 3). It is solemnly true that all men are sinners (Rom. 3:23), but the Antichrist will be more than a sinner, he will be the Man of Sin. As such he will be the direct opposite of Christ, who was the Holy One of God. Sin in all its terrible satanic treachery, daring blasphemy, and tremendous appeal to the corrupt hearts of men, will be consummated in this frightful monster. For fuller notes on the force of these titles we again refer the reader to chapter three. Concerning the Man of Sin it is said, "Who opposeth and exalteth 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" (v. 4). Here he reaches the climax of his frightful blasphemy. He will assume Divine honors, and under pain of death (Rev. 13:15) will demand the worship of all. In vindication of his impious claims he will compel men to regard his mandates as transcending all laws and customs, whether of human or Divine origin (Dan. 7:25). For a season the Almighty will suffer his satanic impiety, the Hinderer having been taken out of the way (v. 7). No lightning flash will strike down his blasted form to the dust. The earth will not open her mouth to swallow him up alive. The Angel of the Lord, who smote Herod with death for a much milder blasphemy, will restrain His hand from the hilt of the sword. For a season Heaven will remain silent while this haughty rebel is doing according to his will. But at the appointed hour "the Lord shall consume (him) with the spirit

of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (v. 8). "Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (v. 9). The Antichrist will be the culmination and consummation of Satan's craft and genius. He will be endowed with superhuman energy so that he shall perform miracles which will be no mere pretenses, but prodigies of power. By means of these miracles and signs he will deceive the entire world. No doubt he will mock the miracles of Christ, as of old Jannes and Jambres duplicated the miracles of Moses. His marvelous deeds will reach their climax in his own resurrection from the dead. 8. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). For our comments on the significance of this name "the Antichrist" we refer our readers to the fourth chapter. There it will be seen that we understand this official title to have a double significance, corresponding to the two main divisions in his career. First, he will pose as the true Christ; later he will stand forth as the avowed opponent of Christ. The above verse presents him as the Arch-apostate. He will, eventually, repudiate the distinguishing truth of Judaism, namely that "Jesus is the Christ;" as he will also set himself against that which is vital in Christianity—the revelation of "the Father and the Son." 9. A brief word upon 1 John 4:3 and we must conclude. "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." It is to the last clause we would here direct attention. The spirit of Antichrist, that which is preparing the way for his appearing, is even now already "in the world." This statement is parallel with 2 Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth (hindereth) will let, until He be taken out of the way." The Mystery of Iniquity, which concerns the incarnation of Satan, is the direct antithesis of "the Mystery of Godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16) which has to do with the Divine incarnation. Just as there was a long preparation by God preceding the advent of His Son, so the Devil is now paving the way for the advent of the Son of Perdition. The Mystery of Iniquity "doth already work;" so in 1 John 4:3 of the spirit of Antichrist we read, "Even now already is it in the world"! How far advanced the preparations of Satan now are for the bringing forth of his Masterpiece is becoming increasingly evident to those who are granted wisdom to discern the signs of the times.

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