

# The Antichrist INTRODUCTION

by A.W. Pink

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## Transcript

The Antichrist

### INTRODUCTION.

Across the varied scenes depicted by prophecy there falls the shadow of a figure at once commanding and ominous. Under many different names like the aliases of a criminal, his character and movements are set before us. It is our intention to write a series of papers concerning this one who will be the full embodiment of human wickedness and the final manifestation of satanic blasphemy. Many others have made reference to this mysterious personage in their general expositions of prophecy, but so far as our examination of the literature on this subject has carried us (and we have endeavored to make it as thorough as possible) there seem to have been very few attempts made to furnish a complete delineation of this Prince of Darkness. We do not know of any exhaustive treatment of the subject, and for this reason, and also because there is no little confusion in the minds of many concerning the character and career of the coming Man of Sin, these papers are not submitted to the attention of Bible students. For upwards of twelve years we have studied diligently and prayerfully what the Scriptures teach about the Pseudo-Christ. The deeper we have carried these studies, the more surprised we are at the prominent place which is given in the Bible to this Son of Perdition. There is an amazing wealth of detail which, when carefully collected and arranged, supplies a vivid biography of the one who is shortly to appear and take the government of the world upon his shoulders. The very fact that the Holy Spirit has caused so much to be written upon the subject at once denotes its great importance. The prominence of the Antichrist in the prophetic Scriptures will at once appear by a glance at the references that follow. The very first prophecy of the Bible takes note of him, for in Genesis 3:15 direct reference is made to the Serpent's "Seed". In exodus a striking type of him is furnished in Pharaoh, the defier of God; the one who cruelly treated His people; the one who by ordering the destruction of all the male children, sought to cut off Israel from being a nation; the one who met with such a drastic end at the hands of the Lord. In the prophecy of Balaam, the Antichrist is referred to under the name of "Asshur" (Num. 24:22),—in future chapters evidence will be given to prove that "Asshur" and the Antichrist are one and the same person. There are many other remarkable types of the Man of Sin to be found in the historical books of the Old Testament, but these we pass by now, as we shall devote a separate chapter to their consideration. In the book of Job he is referred to as "the Crooked Serpent" (Job 26:13): with this should be compared Isaiah 27:1 where, as "the Crooked Serpent", he is connected with the Dragon, though distinguished from him. In the Psalms we find quite a number of references to him; as "the Bloody and Deceitful Man" (Ps. 5:6); "the Wicked (One)" (Ps. 9:17); "the Man of the Earth" (Ps. 10:18); the "Mighty Man" (Ps. 52:1); "the Adversary" (Ps. 74:10); "the

Head over many countries" (Ps. 110:6); "the Evil Man" and "the Violent Man" (Ps. 140:1), etc., etc. Let the student give special attention to Psalms 10, 52, and 55. When we turn to the Prophets there the references to this Monster of Iniquity are so numerous that were we to cite all of them, even without comment, it would take us quite beyond the proper bounds of this introductory chapter. Only a few of the more prominent ones can, therefore, be noticed. Isaiah mentions him: first as the "Assyrian", "the Rod" of God's anger (Isa. 10:5); then as "the Wicked" (Isa. 11:4); then as "the King of Babylon" (Isa. 14:11-20 and cf. 30:31-33); and also as the "Spoiler"—Destroyer (Isa. 16:4). Jeremiah calls him "the Destroyer of the Gentiles" (Jer. 4:7); the "Enemy", the "Cruel One" and "the Wicked" (Jer. 30:14 and 23). Ezekiel refers to him as the "Profane Wicked Prince of Israel" (Ezek. 21:25), and again under the figure of the "Prince of Tyre" (Ezek. 28:2-10), and also as "the chief Prince of Meshech and Tubal" (Ezek. 38:2). Daniel gives a full delineation of his character and furnished a complete outline of his career. Hosea speaks of him as "the King of Princes" (Dan. 8:10), and as the "Merchant" in whose hand are "the balances of deceit" and who "loveth to oppress" (Dan. 12:7). Joel describes him as the Head of the Northern Army, who shall be overthrown because he "magnified himself to do great things" (Joel 2:20). Amos terms him the "Adversary" who shall break Israel's strength and spoil her palaces (Amos 3:11). Micah makes mention of him in the fifth chapter of his prophecy (see Micah 5:6). Nahum refers to him under the name of "Belial" (Heb.) and tells of his destruction (Nah. 1:15). Habakkuk speaks of him as "the Proud Man" who "enlarged his desires as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples" (Hab. 2:5). Zechariah describes him as "the Idol Shepherd" upon whom is pronounced God's "woe", and upon whom descends His judgment (Zech. 11:17). Nor is it only in the Old Testament that we meet with this fearful character. Our Lord Himself spoke of him as the one who should "come in his own name", and who would be "received" by Israel (John 5:43). The apostle Paul gives us a full length picture of him in 2 Thessalonians 2, where he is denominated "that Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition", who coming shall be "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders". The apostle John mentions him by name, and declares that he will deny both the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22). While in the Apocalypse, the last book in the Bible, all these lines of prophecy are found to converge in "the Beast" who shall ultimately be cast, together with the False Prophet, into the lake of fire, there to be joined a thousand years later by the Devil himself, to suffer for ever and ever in that fire specially "prepared" by God. The appearing of the Antichrist is a most appalling and momentous subject, and in the past, many well-meaning writers have deprived this impending event of much of its terror and meaning, by confusing some of the antichrists that have already appeared at various intervals on the stage of human history, with that mysterious being who will tower high above all the sons of Belial, being no less than Satan's counterfeit and opposer of the Christ of God, who is infinitely exalted above all the sons of God. It promotes the interests of Satan to keep the world in ignorance of the coming Super-man, and there can be no doubt that he is the one who is responsible for the general neglect in the study of this subject, and the author, too, of the conflicting testimony which is being given out by those who speak and write concerning it. There have been three principal schools among the interpreters of the prophecies pertaining to the Antichrist. The first have applied these prophecies to persons of the past, to men who have been in their graves for many centuries. The second have given these prophecies a present application, finding their fulfillment in the Papacy which still exists. While the third give them a future application, and look for their fulfillment in a terrible being who is yet to be manifested. Now, widely divergent as are these several views, the writer is assured there is an element of truth in each of them. Many, if not the great majority of the prophecies—not only those pertaining to the Antichrist, but to other prominent objects of prediction—have at least a twofold, and frequently a threefold fulfillment. They have a local and immediate fulfillment: they have a continual and gradual fulfillment: and they have a final and

exhaustive fulfillment. In the second chapter of his first epistle the apostle John declares, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (v. 18). In strict harmony with this, the apostle Paul affirmed that the "mystery of iniquity" was "already" at work in his day (2 Thess. 2:7). This need not surprise us, for many centuries before the apostles, the wise man declared, "The thing that hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9). History works in cycles, but as each cycle is completed we are carried nearer the goal and consummation of history. There have been, then, and there exist today, many antichrists, but these are only so many forecasts and foreshadowings of the one who is yet to appear. But it is of first importance that we should distinguish clearly between an antichrist and the Antichrist. As we have said, there have already been many antichrists, but the appearing of the Antichrist is yet future. The first school of interpreters referred to above, have lighted upon Antiochus Epiphanes as the one who fulfills the prophecies respecting the Antichrist. As far back as the days of Josephus (see his "Antiquities") this view found ardent advocates. Appeal was made to the title he assumed (Epiphanes signifying "Illustrious"); to his opposition against the worship of Jehovah; to his remarkable military achievements; to his diplomatic intrigues; to his defiling of the Temple; to his sacrificing of a pig in the holy of holies; to his setting up of an image; and to his cruel treatment of the Jews. But there are many conclusive reasons to prove that Antiochus Epiphanes could not possibly be the Antichrist, though undoubtedly he was, in several respects, a striking type of him, inasmuch as he foreshadowed many of the very things which this coming Monster will do. It is sufficient to point out that Antiochus Epiphanes had been in his grave for more than a hundred years when the apostle wrote 2 Thessalonians 2. Another striking character who has been singled out by those who believe that the Antichrist has already appeared and finished his course, is Nero. And here again there are, admittedly, many striking resemblances between the type and the antitype. In his office of emperor of the Romans; in his awful impiety; in his consuming egotism, in his bloodthirsty nature; and in his ferocious and fiendish persecution of the people of God, we discover some of the very lineaments which will be characteristic of the Wicked One. But again it will be found that this man of infamous memory, Nero, did nothing more than foreshadow that one who shall far exceed him in satanic malignity. Positive proof that Nero was not the Antichrist is to be found in the fact that he was in his grave before John wrote the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation. The second school of interpreters, to whom reference has been made above, apply the prophecies concerning the Antichrist to the papal system, and see in the succession of the popes the facsimile of the Man of Sin. Attention is called to Rome's hatred of the Gospel of God's grace; to her mongrel combination of political and ecclesiastical rule; to her arrogant claims and tyrannical anathemas upon all who dare to oppose them; to her subtlety, her intrigues, her broken pledges; and last, but not least, to her unspeakable martyrdom of those who have withstood her. The pope, we are reminded, has usurped the place and prerogatives of the Son of God, and his arrogance, his impiety, his claims to infallibility, his demand for personal worship, all tally exactly with what is postulated of the Son of Perdition. Antichristian, Roman Catholicism unquestionably is, yet, even this monstrous system of evil falls short of that which shall yet be headed by the Beast. We shall devote a separate chapter to a careful comparison of the papacy with the prophecies which describe the character and career of the Antichrist. The third school of interpreters believe that the prophecies relating to the Lawless One have not yet received their fulfillment, and cannot do so until this present Day of Salvation has run its course. The Holy Spirit of God, whose presence here now prevents the final outworking of the Mystery of Iniquity, must be removed from these scenes before Satan can bring forth his Masterpiece of deception and opposition to God. Many are the scriptures which teach plainly that the manifestation of the Antichrist is yet future, and these will come before us in our future studies. For the moment we must continue urging upon our readers the importance

of this subject and the timeliness of our present inquiry. The study of Antichrist is not merely one of interest to those who love the sensational, but it is of vital importance to a right understanding of dispensational truth. A true conception of the predictions which regard the Man of Sin is imperatively necessary for an adequate examination of that vast territory of unfulfilled prophecy. A single passage of scripture will establish this. If the reader will turn to the beginning of 2 Thessalonians 2 he will find that the saints in Thessalonica had been waiting for the coming of God's Son from heaven, because they had been taught to expect their gathering together unto Him before God launches His judgments upon the world, which will distinguish the "Day of the Lord". But their faith had been shaken and their hope disturbed. Certain ones had erroneously informed them that "that day" had arrived, and therefore, their expectation of being caught up to meet the Lord in the air had been disappointed. It was to relieve the distress of these believers, and to repudiate the errors of those who had disturbed them, that, moved by the Holy Spirit, the apostle wrote his second epistle to the Thessalonian church. "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition; 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. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth (hindereth) will let, until He be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with 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. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they might believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:1-12). We have quoted this passage at length to show that the Day of the Lord cannot come until after the Rapture (v. 1), after the Apostasy (v. 3), and after the appearing of the Man of Sin (v. 3), whose character and career here briefly but graphically sketched. The Antichrist is to run his career of unparalleled wickedness after all Christians have been removed from these scenes, for it is under him, as their leader, that all the hosts of ungodliness shall muster to meet their doom by the summary judgment of God. Has then, the Wicked One been revealed? or must we still say, as the apostle said in his day, that while the "mystery of iniquity" is even now working, there is something "withholding" (restraining), that he should be revealed "in his time"? The vital importance of the answer which is given to these questions will further appear when we connect with this description of the Antichrist given in 2 Thessalonians 2 the other prophecies which reveal the exact length of time within which his course must be accomplished. Our reason for saying this is because the majority of the prophecies yet unfulfilled are to be fulfilled during the time that the Antichrist is the central figure upon earth. Moreover, the destruction of the Antichrist and his forces will be the grand finale in the age-long conflict between the Serpent and the woman's Seed, as He returns to set up His kingdom. The dominant view which has been held by Protestants since the time of the Reformation is that the many predictions relating to the Antichrist describe, instead, the rise, progress, and doom of the papacy. This mistake has led to others, and given rise to the scheme of prophetic interpretation which has prevailed throughout Christendom. When the predictions concerning the Man of Sin were allegorized, consistency required that all associated and collateral predictions should also be allegorized, and especially those which relate to his doom, and the kingdom which is to be established on the overthrow of his power. When the period of his predicted course

was made to measure the whole duration of the papal system, it naturally followed that the predictions of the associated events should be applied to the history of Europe from the time that the Bishop of Rome became recognized as the head of the Western Churches. It was, really, this mistake of Luther and his contemporaries in applying to Rome the prophecies concerning the Antichrist which is responsible, we believe, for the whole modern system of post-millennialism. The Reformers were satisfied that the Papacy had received its death blow, and though it lingered on, the Protestants of the sixteenth century were confident it could never recover. Believing that the doom of the Roman hierarchy was sealed, that the kingdom of Satan was rocking on its foundations, and that a brief interval would witness a complete overthrow, they at once seized upon the prophecies which announced the setting up of the kingdom of Christ as immediately following the destruction of the Antichrist, and applied them to Protestantism. It is true that some of them did not seem to fit very well, but human ingenuity soon found a way to overcome these difficulties. The obstacle presented by those prophecies that announced the immediate setting up of Christ's kingdom, following the overthrow and destruction of Satan's, was surmounted by an appeal to the analogy furnished in the overthrow of Satan's kingdom—if this was a tedious process, a gradual thing which required time to complete, why not so with the other? If the rapidly waning power of the papacy was sufficient to guarantee its ultimate extermination, why should not the progress of the Reformation presage the ultimate conquering of the world for Christ! If, as it seemed clear to the Reformers, the papacy was the Man of Sin, and St. Peter's was the "temple" in which he usurped the place and prerogatives of Christ, then, this premise established, all the other conclusions connected with their scheme of prophetic interpretation must logically follow. To establish the premise was the first thing to be done, and once the theory became a settled conviction it was no difficult thing to find scriptures which appeared to confirm their view. The principal difficulty in the way was to dispose of the predictions which limited the final stage of Antichrist's career to forty-two months, or twelve hundred sixty days. This was accomplished by what is known as the "year-day" theory, which regards each of the 1260 days as "prophetic days", that is, as 1260 years, and thus sufficient room was afforded to allow for the protracted history of Roman Catholicism. Without entering into further details, it is evident at once that, if this allegorical interpretation of the prophecies regarding Antichrist can be proven erroneous, then the whole post-millennial and "historical" schemes of interpretation fall to the ground, and thousands of the voluminous expositions of prophecy which have been issued during the past three hundred and fifty years are set aside as ingenious but baseless speculations. This, of itself, is sufficient to demonstrate the importance of our present inquiry. Not only is the importance of our subject denoted by the prominent place given to it in the Word of God, and not only is its value established by the fact that a correct understanding of the person of Antichrist is one of the chief keys to the right interpretation of the many prophecies which yet await their fulfillment, but the timeliness of this inquiry is discovered by noting that the Holy Spirit has connected the appearing of the Antichrist with the Apostasy: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (the Apostasy) first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3). These two things are here joined together, and if it can be shown that the Apostasy is already far advanced, then we may be certain that the manifestation of the Man of Sin cannot be far distant. There is little need for us to make a lengthy digression here and give a selection from the abundance of evidence to hand, which shows that the Apostasy is already far advanced. The great majority of those whom we are addressing have already had their eyes opened by God to discern the Christ-dishonoring conditions which exist on almost every side. It will be enough to barely mention the gathering of the "tares" into bundles, which is taking place before our eyes; the rapid spread of Spiritism, with its "seducing spirits and doctrines of demons", and the significant and solemn fact that thousands of those who are ensnared by it are those who have departed from the formal profession of the faith (1 Tim.

4:1); the "form of godliness" which still exists, but which alas! in the vast majority of instances "denies its power "; the alarming development and growth of Roman Catholicism in this land, and the lethargic indifference to this by most of those who bear the name of Christ; the denial of every cardinal doctrine of the faith once delivered to the saints, which is now heard in countless pulpits of every denomination; the "scoffing" which is invariably met with by those who teach the imminent return of the Lord Jesus; and the Laodicean spirit which is now the very atmosphere of Christendom, and from which few, if any, of the Lord's own people are entirely free—these, and a dozen others which might be mentioned, are the proofs which convince us that the time must be very near at hand when the Divine Hinderer shall be removed, and when Satan shall bring forth his Son to head the final revolt against God, ere the Lord Jesus returns to this earth and sets up His kingdom. This then, shows the need of a prayerful examination of what God has revealed of those things "which must shortly come to pass". The very fact that the time when Satan's Masterpiece shall appear is rapidly drawing nearer, supplies further evidence of the importance and timeliness of our present inquiry. The practical value of these preliminary considerations should at once be apparent. What we have written in connection with this incarnation of Satan who is shortly to appear, is not the product of a disordered imagination but the subject of Divine revelation. The warning given that the appearing of the Antichrist cannot be far distant springs not from the fears of an alarmist, but is required by the Signs of the Times which, in the light of Scripture, are fraught with significant meaning to all whose senses are exercised to discern both good and evil. The many proofs that the manifestation of the Man of Sin is an event of the near future are so many calls to God's own children to be ready for the Return of the Savior, for before the Son of Perdition can be revealed the Lord Himself must first descend into the air and catch away from these scenes, unto Himself, His own blood-bought people. Therefore, it behooves each one of us to make "our calling and election sure", and to heed that urgent admonition of the Savior "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord" (Luke 12:35, 36).

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