

# The Papal and Hierarchical System - Part 2

by Joseph John Gurney

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*The sermon explores the concept of antichrist and the antichristian system, describing its characteristics and ultimate fate.*

**Scripture:** 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 John 2:18, 1 John 4:3, Revelation 11:7, Revelation 17:3, Revelation 19:19

**Topics:** "Antichrist", "False Doctrine"

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## Description

Joseph John Gurney preaches on the topic of Antichrist, the man of sin, as described in the Bible. The term 'antichrist' is shown to have a general application, representing a spirit among men that rebels against the dominion of the Son of God, invents false doctrine, and corrupts good manners. The apostles warn about the presence of deceivers and antichrists who deny the Father and the Son, spreading false teachings and leading people astray. The Scriptures provide a detailed account of the rise and characteristics of the man of sin, who exalts himself above God, deceives with signs and wonders, and persecutes the saints, culminating in a final battle against the Lord and his faithful followers.

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## Transcript

### ON ANTICHRIST, THE MAN OF SIN

"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.... He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son:" 1 John ii. 18, 22. Again, this apostle says, "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:" iv. 3.

This last testimony to the work and character of antichrist, is repeated in his second epistle, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist:" 2 John 7. p38 It is clear, from these passages, that the term antichrist is of very general application, as descriptive of that spirit among men which rebels against the dominion of the Son of God, invents false doctrine, and corrupts good manners.

Such was the spirit of those spots in the believers' feasts of charity, of whom the apostles Peter and Jude speak in their epistles "clouds without water, carried about of winds, trees whose fruit withereth,.... raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever;" Jude 12, 13; comp. 2 Pet. ii. 10-22. It appears that these sons of error and dissipation

professed a peculiar degree of sanctity--" speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats," &c.

There can be no doubt that even in apostolic times the seeds of heresy and corruption were sown in the church, and that afterwards, these seeds produced a vast and varied crop of bitterness, unbelief, and sin. Here it ought to be confessed, that except in the articles of forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, p39 there is nothing in these descriptions, which bears, with any precise force, on the papal and hierarchical system. But it is evident that in the process of time, some great distinguishing antichrist at once the professor and enemy of Christianity was to come forth, in bold relief, pre-eminent among all those spirits which are ranged in opposition to the true kingdom of Christ.

Paul, in the spirit of prophecy, declares him to be "the man of sin," and gives a vivid description of his character, his work, and his end. It appears that the Thessalonians were agitated by the expectation of the early coming of Christ in judgment -- a mistake which might easily arise from their ignorance of the fact, that "the last days," which, as John asserts, were then "indeed come," are nothing more than the last dispensation; and that in these last days, the man of sin must first be revealed, and must play his awful part on the stage of ecclesiastical history, before the Saviour would appear, "the second time, without sin (or a sin-offering,) unto salvation:" Heb. ix. 28.

Nor could the man of sin himself be revealed until he that let and hindered him (probably the Pagan government of Rome) was p40 taken out of the way. "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (or apostasy) 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 ....

And now ye know what withholdeth, (or restraineth t) that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth J (will let) until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked 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.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, that they all may be damned (condemned) who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness:" 2 Thess. ii. 3 12. p41 We have no reason to imagine that any individual potentate is here described, but rather some system of government some unholy power blaspheming against God, by the presumptuous claim of divine attributes, and deceiving mankind, after the working of Satan, by a false show of miracles.

The thorough ungodliness of this power is marked by the emphatic words, "all deceivableness of unrighteousness." For a further development of the history of antichrist, we must have recourse to the Revelation. There we first meet with him in the character of the beast who slew the two witnesses. "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophecy a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sackcloth and when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast[6] that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, shall make war against them and kill them:" Rev. xi. 7.

Here antichrist is represented not as identical with Satan, but as coming forth out of p42 Satan's dominions, and employed in Satan's work, (comp. ii. 13;) that of persecuting the children of God, the witnesses for Christ in the world.[7] In the following chapter we have an account of the true church, represented as a woman clothed with the sun that original source of light and heat and having under her

feet the moon, by which we may understand the borrowed light of man's intelligence, used and sanctified in every true Christian, but always held in holy subordination to the Spirit of God.

She brings forth the man Christ Jesus, the first and greatest of her sons, and after being persecuted by the great red dragon, which is Satan, she flies on eagle's wings into the wilderness. There she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, or 1260 days (that is, as I suppose 1260 years) from the face of the serpent who continued to make war with "the remnant of her seed, which kept the commandments p43 of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." And who were these? the true disciples of Jesus hidden, it may be, among the rocks and valleys of Piedmont, and other Alpine regions; simple people who placed no dependence on ceremonies, but worshipped the Father and the Son, in spirit and in truth.

Then follows, in chap. xiii. a remarkable display of the anti-christian powers. A beast is seen rising out of the sea (coming it may be from the bottomless pit, represented by the fathomless ocean) whose ten horns are crowned with as many crowns, and his seven heads inscribed with the names of blasphemy. One of his heads had been wounded to death, but that deadly wound had been healed. The deadly wound inflicted on Rome by the Goths, Vandals, and other barbarian powers, had been healed by her becoming nominally Christian; and now she is a spiritual ruler, having in subjection, for use offensive and defensive, her ten crowned horns, the temporal powers into which the Roman empire was now divided.

It was the dragon (that is, Satan,) from whom this beast -- a terrible creature, leopard, bear, and lion united -- received his power, and seat, (probably p44 in Rome, the ancient capital of the empire) and great authority. Thus enthroned, he continues unmoved during the whole time of the church's secession in the wilderness 1260 years. And how does he conduct himself? He opens his mouth in blasphemy against God makes war with the saints, and overcomes them; has power given to him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations; and receives the worship of mankind -- true Christians excepted.

In the mean time another beast is seen coming up out of the earth (or out of the bottomless pit supposed to be under the earth) having two horns like a lamb, yet speaking as a dragon. This is the same power, as I believe, under another phase or rather the spiritual head of that power, who assumes the visage of the lamb, but is a wolf in sheep's clothing, and his voice is like the voice of a dragon. It is he who "exercises all the power of the first beast," of which he is in fact the most essential part even the head making a full use, for his own purposes, of those terrible temporal powers, the ten crowned horns; claiming worship for the first beast (i. e. the whole antichristian power, including himself p45 in his assumed character of Lord of lords and King of kings); doing great wonders, comparable to the bringing down of fire from heaven; deceiving mankind by his sorceries and false miracles; commanding them to perpetrate idolatry, and to worship the image of the beast; placing his mark on all men, rich and poor, free and bond, (without bearing which they were not permitted any participation in this world's traffic); and inscribing on their foreheads the name of antichrist with the number of his name, which ever falls short of the true sabbatical rest, even of the perfect number seven being six hundred and sixty and six that is the numeral six applied to each successive step in the arithmetical numeration.

We have found occasion to observe that the antichristian forces are ranged under three powers, the dragon, or old serpent; the beast or temporal power under spiritual government; and the spiritual ruler of the beast, who is one with him, because his head -- the lamb who speaks like a dragon. This second phase of antichrist virtually the same power,-- is soon afterwards called the "false prophet" (chap. xvi. 13.) and out of the mouths of p46 of these three proceed unclean spirits -- miracle-mongers, who go forth unto all the kings of the earth to gather them to battle against the Lord and his people.

This head of antichrist, or false prophet, is now brought more fully into view in the character of the "great whore," with whom the kings of the earth and its intoxicated inhabitants have committed fornication -- all which, according to the known phraseology of the Hebrew prophets, sets forth idolatry -- in that they worshipped this spiritual deceiver, instead of the Father and the Son, and were deeply imbued with other idolatrous practices which she had introduced. "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, (the head of the beast is now represented as his rider) full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication; and upon her forehead was a name written, mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:" xvii. 3-6. Soon afterwards we find the following express information -- "And the woman which thou sawest, is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth:" v. 18.

Now it appears that the ten crowned horns, or the ten temporal powers say, European nations, which were under the power of this spiritual ruler -- were to be of "one mind," and were to give their power and strength unto the beast -- or rather to the head of the beast -- the lamb who has the voice of a dragon, or in other words, to the whore who sitteth on the waters, that is, "on the peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Such was to be the state of things for a time.

But behold the Lamb against whom they wage impious warfare and who is truly Lord of lords, and King of kings who has the hearts of all kings and potentates in his hands and the called, and chosen, and faithful, who are with him, shall overcome these temporal powers, even by the sword of the Spirit, the word of truth. And what shall be the consequence? Instead of continuing to be part of antichrist, these powers shall separate from him, and oppose him. Kings shall become the nursing fathers of the true church, and queens her nursing mothers. (Thus the earth helps the persecuted woman in her flight, into the wilderness, swallowing up the stream of oppression and cruelty, which Satan is pouring forth out of his mouth against her.)

And now these ten horns shall be haters of the "great whore," whom they once loved and followed, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh (i. e. seize her possessions,) and burn her with fire: xvii. 12 18. Soon follows the cry of the angel, whom John saw in his visions "come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory " probably the Angel of the covenant, the Saviour himself. "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. (Ecclesiastics become merchants, and selling pardons to sinners, are enriched by her abundance and luxuries.) "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues."

Then follows the description of her being burnt with fire -- amidst the mourning and lamentation of all who used to commit fornication with her, and traffic with her, and partake in her delicacies;-- and this baptism of fire -- this desolating punishment, of whatsoever nature it may prove detects the evil things which are in

her, the foul spirits and unclean birds that haunt her, and the innocent blood which she has shed. "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth;" xviii. 24.

In the following chapter the prophetic account of the conflict between these evil powers and the Word of God, is brought to its close. The Son, under that peculiar title, is seen in the opening heavens, sitting on a white horse, wearing many crowns, the sharp sword going out of his mouth, and his garments dipped in blood. On his vesture and on his thigh his name is seen written, King of kings, p50 and Lord of lords, and he is followed by the armies of his saints, all on white horses, and clothed in fine linen white and clean.

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth," says the apostle, "and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet (his spiritual head) that wrought miracles before him, with which he had deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone:" xix. 19, 20. Soon afterwards we read that the devil (after one more unholy effort) was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever:" xx. 10.

The whole view thus given in Scripture of antichrist, is calculated to impress us with an awful sense of his wickedness and evil working. The principal features in the character of that ungodly power are profaneness and blasphemy, falsehood and fraud, pride, covetousness, luxury, idolatry, malice, and cruelty. This horrible personification of many evil things p51 assumes, in the first place, the attributes of deity,-- he exalts himself above all that is called God he pretends to wield the divine prerogatives -- he is lord over all mortal kings and potentates.

The names of blasphemy marked on his forehead, are of that peculiar kind, which designate his usurping the place and functions of the Most High. If we suppose a spiritual power which pretends to dispose of all temporal kingdoms as he pleases, and who undertakes in his own authority, to forgive sins -- however multitudinous, dark, or bloody they may be -- we must acknowledge that such a power blasphemes, in the sense in which blasphemy is ascribed to antichrist. If the same power enslaves kings and nations under false pretences; if he entices them by a show of superior sanctity, and by myriads of juggler's tricks, false relics, and lying wonders and miracles; it must be confessed, that he hereby fills up the scriptural character of antichrist, as it relates to fraud and falsehood.

If he assumes the trappings of human splendour; if he sells his pardons for gold; if the kings of the earth bow at his feet, and wait upon him as his servants; if his eye is full of haughtiness; if wealth p52 and luxury, and often the most unbridled licentiousness, distinguish his annals we cannot deny that he answers to the character of antichrist, in the articles of pride, covetousness, and luxury. If he not only demands the worship both of body and soul, for those who are not God, but actually gives to these false gods, the outward form of images before which his followers prostrate themselves, as the heathen do before their idols, it is evident that such a course falls in with the scriptural account of the lamb who had the voice of a dragon, who made an image of the beast, and compelled all men to worship it.

Here is the friend and patron of spiritual fornication, or in other words, of idolatry. If, lastly, this supposed power makes use of the temporal swords of the kings under his dominion, for the cruel abuse, and horrid persecution unto death, of myriads of the followers of the Lamb; if he rejoices in his ailtos da fe, and delights in the writhing agonies of the saints who are consumed, through his interference with the civil magistrate, by slow fires; if he invents every species of torture, that he may torment all those who resist his

reign and deny his sanctity it must surely be allowed that p53 here we have a practical representation of antichrist, who wounds and slays the children of God; and in whose bosom is found the BLOOD of his saints and martyrs.

All these things have marked the history of Rome spiritual -- the Babylon of the Apocalypse; and the resemblance of the prophetic future with the historic record, appears to me to afford some very strong indications, if not irresistible proof, that the antichrist of the New Testament and Rome spiritual (including all that is found of the like nature under other names) are ONE and the same.

[6] Footnote:

a wild beast. It is to be regretted that our translators have used the same version for &ov, in chap. iv. 6, where some angelic creature is spoken of. "Living creature" would there be more just and descriptive.

[7] Footnote:

These are called the two olive trees, because it is the heavenly unction which qualifies them for their work, and flows through them; and they are described as two, simply, as I believe, to express plurality; with reference to that well known principle of Jewish jurisprudence, that out of the mouth of two witnesses (i. e. two at least) shall every word be established.

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