

Lecture 5: The Man of Sin, And His Complete Overthrow

Prophetical Outlines: Seven Lectures · 2 Thessalonians 2; Daniel 7

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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, shewing 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 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; 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 should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:1-14).

In these lectures, beloved friends, we have hitherto been occupied with subjects showing forth the grace, the power, and the glory of God. But we must remember that, although God has been working in the world from the first, Satan has been working in the world too; so that while the prophetic page points out plainly what God's purposes are with regard to those who are His, we have also dark shadows, calculated to give deep sorrow of heart, set forth in the prophecies of Scripture as to man's future. It is one of these dark pictures of divine truth that we are about to consider this evening -the man of sin {see 2 Thess. 2:3 -- the Antichrist},

as the apostle calls him in the passage I have read. And perhaps you will be surprised when I tell you that this subject is spread over a considerable portion of the Bible. So extensive is it that I have no thought to-night of setting before you more than a few general characteristics and circumstances concerning this masterpiece of Satan's iniquity. I shall, therefore, content myself with referring only to a few of the Scriptures which might be quoted in the consideration of this subject. The importance of the subject, beloved friends, holding as it does such a place in prophetic writings, is plainly set before

us by the apostle Peter. In the latter part of the first chapter of his second epistle he says, We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn {2 Pet. 1:19}.

So that this and every other part of inspired prophetic instruction is presented to us as a lamp with which God Himself has furnished us, that we may walk well-pleasing in His sight in passing through this present evil world. Many parts of the Old Testament Scriptures call attention to this wicked one; and in the New Testament we find that our Lord Himself, in His ministry, again and again referred in the most solemn way to this same person. In the fifth chapter of John's gospel we find Him saying,

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).

After the Lord had been virtually rejected by the nation of Israel, as we find in the twelfth chapter of Matthew's gospel, He speaks prophetically of the Jewish nation in connection with this lawless one. He says, When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none (Matt. 12:43).

That unclean spirit is doubtless the spirit of idolatry, which in the days of the Lord had left the nation of Israel. But it found no rest. By-and-by it will return again, in association with other evil spirits. 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 [a sevenfold spirit of diabolical iniquity, that is to be impersonated in the man of sin] 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 {Matt. 12:44, 45}.

Nothing can be plainer from these words, than that our Lord here spoke prophetically of the last state of Israel as a nation, when its iniquity shall be full. There is another passage, in the twentyfourth of Matthew, to which I will just refer. In answering the question of the disciples, when He would come again to Israel, among other things He says, When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, {the image of the first beast of Revelation} spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains {Matt. 24:15, 16}.

Now if you look at the end of the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel, you will see that the prophet refers to the same person whom our Lord here calls attention to in His relation to the

temple, which will have been rebuilt before that. 5These references of our Lord's plainly teach the importance of the subject. The portion of Scripture that I read in Thessalonians shows us that this subject formed a part of the ministry of the apostle Paul in going from city to city. He was not long in Thessalonica; for we find from the Acts that his visit there was short; and although the persons who received the truth were only then converted by his personal ministry, yet he says in writing to them, Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you I told you these things? {2 Thess. 2:5}.

We know also, from the seventeenth chapter of the Acts and the seventh verse, that what stirred up the persecution there was not only preaching that Christ was the Savior of sinners, but that He was coming to reign as the only and rightful Potentate. The adversaries said, These all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus {Acts 17:7}.

We find the apostle, in writing his second epistle to the Thessalonians, under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, occupies a considerable part of it in setting forth the truth as to the characteristics, ways, and overthrow of “the man of sin.” If you pass on to the first and second epistles of John, you will find that he again and again speaks of this wicked one; and in the book of Revelation, which is a book of results, and looks at things in their ripened condition, you will find a more ample account of the actings and influence of this diabolical working than in any other part of Scripture. From these considerations, therefore, it seems to me to be unquestionable that God has made it an important subject for the consideration of His dear children. With regard to this fruit of Satan’s power, he is called in the extract from the epistle to the Thessalonians we have read, the man of sin, the son of perdition {2 Thess. 2:3}, the wicked [or lawless] one {see 2 Thess. 2:8}.

He is called by various names in the Old Testament Scriptures. For instance, he is called in the book of Psalms the oppressor {Psa. 72:4},

and many other names. He is called by Isaiah “the king.” There is a verse in Isaiah to which I must call attention, because he is there seen in connection with his destruction. It is the last verse of the thirtieth chapter:?? For Tophet, is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it (Isa. 30:33).

He is called also by the prophet Daniel

5. {Some writers, as H. H. Snell here, have not rightly distinguished the antichrist, who is the Man of Sin, the False Prophet, the King of Dan 11:36, the idol shepherd of Zech, the man of the earth, the second beast of Rev. 13 -- from the first beast of Rev. 13, who is the coming Prince of Dan 9, the Lucifer of Isa. 14, the last one who holds the power of empire first committed to the Babylonian, Nebuchadnezzar. This first beast of Rev. 13 is the head of the revived Roman Empire. The second beast is the Antichrist, king in Jerusalem, who heads up the worship of the apostates of Christendom and Judaism.}

the king {Dan. 11:36}, a vile person {Dan. 11:21 -- actually, this is a foreshadow of the final king of the North},

&c. He is called by the apostle John Antichrist {1 John 2:18};

and in the book of Revelation this Satanic system is brought before us in its full development under the names of the beast {another beast, Rev. 13:11-18} and false prophet {Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10}.

The question may be asked, What are the characteristics of the man of sin? In reply to which, let me first observe that the account we have is not simply a description of a series of principles, but of a

person manifesting human practical action in various ways. He is called the man of sin {see 2 Thess. 2:3},

because he is sin personified. The context shows us that he is man unbridled, unrestrained in will and pride, and that, under the mighty energy of Satan, he is carrying out the principles of a false, unregenerated, alienated heart -- a heart allowed to manifest to the full its enmity against God. He is described also by the apostle John in his first and second epistles. In the second chapter of his first epistle we read, 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. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us {1 John 2:18}.

Be sure to notice here that these many antichrists were once in association with those who were connected with Christ -they went out from us.

I call attention to this, because you find in the second chapter of the second epistle to Thessalonians, the apostasy and the man of sin are associated together, and you also see them connected together here by the Holy Ghost through the apostle John. In the first epistle of John we have also the expression -He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22).

And further, 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 (1 John 4:3).

In John's second epistle we read, 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).

Now here we have the moral, or rather immoral, qualities of the person. He subverts the very foundations of Christianity; he denies the Father and the Son; he denies that Jesus Christ has come in flesh; he is thoroughly and openly a rejecter of the foundation truths of Christianity; he is a setter aside of the person of Christ Himself. Moreover, in the second chapter of the second epistle to

the Thessalonians, this man of sin, this son of perdition, is spoken of as one

drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus {Rev. 17:6}.

who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God (2 Thess. 2:4).

But popery and the beast are two distinct lines of truth, as thirteenth and seventeenth of Revelation show. And I believe Satan has helped to foster this wrong conclusion, in order that he might the more quietly and gradually work out this mystery of iniquity, of which we are told in one place that it

He does not simply deny Christ, but he opposes God. He denies the only true God; he exalts himself above every God; that is, above the gods of the heathen, as well as above the only true God, the God of Israel. He takes his place in the temple (for at that time the temple at Jerusalem will be built), sitting there to be worshiped; and, as we shall see by-and-by when he is revealed, all the world will be

taken up with him and worship him. Thus the Scriptures give us clear instruction as to the characteristics of the “man of sin.” The question now comes, Who can this person be? I am aware that a great many believe that he must be the pope of Rome, but it seems to me to be utterly impossible to reconcile that opinion with the Scriptures we have read. It is convenient for Protestants to throw the whole thing upon the pope, little thinking that they themselves may be deeply impregnated with what has been rightly called “the popery of Protestantism.” If any one said that the system of popery accorded with what we find in the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation, where we have the description of “the harlot,” with whom the kings of the earth and the people committed spiritual fornication, it would be true enough. We read there of multitudes of all nations who are astray in their affections and desires while professing the name of Christ, whose hearts are set upon other objects whilst retaining the outward profession of His name; I say, then, if that was what some contended for as applicable to popery, we should have difficulty in conceding to the assertion that popery has a large place in the religious Babylon of the chapter in Revelation to which I have alluded. But I could not be acting faithfully if I said that that description of the principles there set forth was limited to popery. Doubtless, Popery does take the lead, but I believe it has more or less diffused itself throughout the whole of Christendom. I will try to give a few reasons to show why it cannot be the pope of Rome that is here referred to under the title of “the man of sin.” In the first place, as we have seen, Scripture tells us that the man of sin opposes and denies the living and true God, not giving God a place, saying that he himself is God. Secondly, he denies the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh, says that he is the Messiah, the Christ, and that he is the person to whose coming the Scriptures refer. Without saying one thing in favour of popery, but believing it to be entirely contrary to the mind of God, yet justice would forbid that I should say that the pope himself shows that he is God, or that he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that he is seated in the temple of God, which marks Jerusalem as its locality, forbidding worship to any God but himself; nor can it be said that he openly and avowedly denies the Father and the Son, and the fact that Jesus Christ has come in flesh. Why, the very motto of the pope of Rome is that he is “God’s vicar on the earth.” It is, doubtless, because there is so much terrible evil associated with the system of popery that Christians have been led somewhat hastily, and without weighing the Scriptures, to associate it with that system of harlotry that we find spoken of in the Revelation as being

doth already work {2 Thess. 2:7},

and in another, that even now are there many antichrists {1 John 2:18}.

The eyes of many have been closed to the terrible system which Satan has at work round about us; and certainly, if Christians were aware of it, they would see the importance of clinging to the Lord Jesus, feeling that under His care only could they be safe from the many and dangerous snares which are laid to entrap them. Satan is actively and successfully bringing in a flood of infidelity. Then, again, this person who is spoken of as “the man of sin” is to continue his open career a limited time only -- for forty-two months. You will also find at the close of the seventeenth chapter of Revelation that the harlot is destroyed by the kings and beast, and their kingdom given to the beast. And the ten horns which thou

sawest upon [or rather, “and”] the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled (Rev. 17:16, 17).

This shows that the system of popery will be set aside by the kings of the earth. After bearing the burden of this unchaste woman for a long time, the kings and nations grow weary of her, cast her off, hate her flesh, rob her of her earthly riches and glory, and then give their allegiance to the beast. So popery really will have to give way and make room for “the man of sin” -- “the beast.” 6 But we must pass on to notice another point. There is something spoken of as restraining, keeping down, and hindering the full development of this great mystery of iniquity. We have the apostle telling us in the sixth verse, 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 will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that Wicked [or that lawless one] be revealed {2 Thess. 2:6}.

Observe, here, the mystery of iniquity began to work in the apostle’s day. John, as we have seen, tells us that the persons who were doing the work of the Antichrist had been in professed fellowship with the saints of God. The evil has been going on from that hour until now. But there is some power that is hindering its full and open revelation. Now, what is that power? It seems very evident that it can be but one. Remember that the agents in this mystery of iniquity are man and Satan; and they would not put on the restraining influence, that is very clear. Then we know that God is here, dwelling by His Spirit in the body of Christ -- that is,

6. {The beast on which the woman sits for the first half of Daniel’s 70th week is the political head of the revived Roman empire, i.e., the first beast of Rev. 13. The man of sin, i.e., the final Antichrist of prophecy, is the second beast in Rev. 13, who is also the false prophet of Rev. 19.}

the Church. Are we sufficiently alive to this fact? People read the Old Testament Scriptures, and are delighted when they find that the glory of Jehovah filled the temple; but they little think that the presence of God by His Spirit is dwelling now in the spiritual temple -- the Church, the body of Christ -- composed, not of bricks and mortar, but of living stones, born again of the Holy Ghost, and cemented together by the blood of Jesus. Such is declared in the second chapter of Ephesians, where we are spoken of as being builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit {Eph. 2:22}.

God’s presence, then, is here. God has a dwelling now on earth; it is His Church, composed of His own people, who are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

We have two things here: regenerated people -- that is one thing; and the Holy Ghost indwelling these regenerated people as the Church of God -- that is another thing. The Church is God’s house, God’s habitation; and the point was so solemnly understood in apostolic times, that when a person was put outside the Church in discipline, he was delivered over to Satan. The world is Satan’s place. The Church is filled with the presence of God by His Spirit; the world lieth in the wicked one, who walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour {see 1 Pet. 5:8}.

It seems to me that the great restraining influence is what one sees put in action every day. If a man came into this town with some rampant infidel doctrine, something that attacked fundamental truths of Scripture, -- I ask, who would rise up against him? Who would resist the innovation on the truth? Would not the saints of God? What is the power that would prompt them? Would it not be the Spirit of God, who dwells in them? This is the restraining power to which I allude. The Spirit-taught soul can see the mystery working round about on almost every hand; but it dare not come out openly until the Church is gone. When the hoped-for coming of Christ, the longed-for moment arrives, when the Lord will descend into the air with a shout and voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and His saints are caught up to meet Him, then we find from the twelfth chapter of the Revelation that Satan, who has now access into the heavenlies to accuse the brethren, will be driven out, and will come down upon this earth with great power, knowing that it will be but for a short time. Then, with his mighty influence and energy, he will invest this being with the powers of the infernal regions. But, thank God, we shall not be here then; and this is a very important point to notice. If you turn to the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation for a moment, you will find that when this wicked one is blaspheming, that he not only blasphemes God, but he blasphemes also the dwellers in heaven {see Rev. 13:6}. 7

Who are the dwellers in heaven? They are the saints who have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, who in the previous chapter are called on to rejoice because Satan is cast out of

7. {The reader is reminded that Rev. 13:1-10 refers to the head of the revived Roman empire (the coming prince of Dan. 9). It is the second beast who is the Antichrist, the Man of Sin, the false prophet (the religious mouth-piece of the first beast).}

heaven. It is rather a common expression in the book of Revelation. The dwellers in heaven are set in contrast with "the dwellers on earth." Young believers were acquainted with these truths in the apostle's days. Therefore, the apostle wrote to those early Christians at Thessalonica, taking it for granted that they were aware of this. He says, Now ye know what withholdeth, &c. {2 Thess. 2:6}.

You must not suppose it requires old Christians to enter into these things. I am persuaded that young Christians often enter into them with a great deal more simplicity and earnestness than old Christians. I have seen many young Christians who have entered into the truths of the coming of the Lord, and His judgments and glories, with the greatest readiness of mind and spiritual intelligence; whereas old Christians, from wrong thoughts which they have obtained from bad teaching, have found it very difficult to unlearn and overcome long-cherished opinions and prejudices. It is happy for any to be ready to bow to God's word. It is well to remember, that however many difficulties some find in their way, it does not alter what is said regarding these things in the unalterable word of God. But to return to our subject. When the saints, then, are gone -- when those who are Christ's have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air -- when that which withholdeth is removed, we are told, then shall that wicked [or lawless one] be revealed {2 Thess. 2:8}.

Then he will openly appear, but not before. In the book of Daniel we have instruction as to the working and development of this mystery of iniquity {2 Thess. 2:7}.

In the seventh chapter we have, first, the four empires of 8 the times of the Gentiles {Luke 21:24} under the similitude of wild beasts, and the fourth or Roman empire is largely described. We have its characteristics in its unity under the form of a fourth beast, dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly. It had great iron teeth; it devoured, &c. We have it also in its separate kingdoms, in its "ten horns." Among them also another little horn was seen, manifesting intelligence, having eyes as a man {see Dan. 7:8},

and also speaking great things {Dan. 7:8}.

The explanation is given in the twenty-fourth and following verses: And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end {Dan. 7:24-26}.

8. {The fourth empire is indeed seen in its revived state at the time of the end. The little horn of Dan. 7 is the coming Roman prince of Dan. 9, the first beast of Rev. 13 -- the political head. Dan. 7 does not refer to the Antichrist, the Man of Sin.}

This little horn of the beast is doubtless the ruling power of the ten kingdoms -- the fourth beast. The seventeenth of Revelation tells us that the ten kings have one mind, and give their strength and power unto the beast. The power and rule of the whole empire composed then of ten kingdoms is impersonated in this little horn. Observe, too, that he speaks great words against the most High; he blasphemes God; he wears out the saints of the most High; he persecutes and puts to death the saints then on the earth; he will think to change times and laws, and they [that is, the times and laws, Jewish feasts and ordinances, whatever they may be] shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time {Dan. 7:25}

he will set aside the ordinances, however formal and imperfect they may be, which the Jews in unbelief shall then have set up in acknowledging the God of Abraham. The next verse shows us, however, that his dominion is destroyed. The eleventh verse says, that because of the voice of the great words which this little horn spake, the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. Although this little horn shall have the rule of the ten kingdoms concentrated in himself, nevertheless, both it and him shall be destroyed. The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end {Dan. 7:26}.

In all this we see pretty clearly, not only the apostate termination of the times of the Gentiles, but also that its power will be concentrated in blaspheming God and oppressing the saints then on the earth, the faithful Jews. In the ninth chapter the same instrument of Satan is referred to as the one who shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, &c. This shows us that it will not be till the midst of the week, or at the end of three and half years, that he will be publicly unmasked, and come out in the grossest form of pride and

infidelity. With regard to the expression, a time and times and the dividing of time {Dan. 7:25},

we shall find that “times” are used for “years,” as, for instance, in the marginal reading of the thirteenth verse of the eleventh chapter. This, too, agrees exactly with the periods of forty-two months, and 1260 days, the time that the beast of the Revelation will continue after he is revealed. In the eleventh chapter we have the wilful king spoken of in the twenty-first and twenty-second verses. And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant {Dan. 11:21, 22 -- this is actually a past precursor to the king of the North}.

Let us also read the thirty-sixth and following verse. And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall

magnify himself above all {Dan. 11:36, 37 -- this is the Antichrist, king in Jerusalem, the man of sin}.

Without making further remarks on these portions of the book of Daniel, it is evident that they refer to the same period as that we have been reading in the second epistle to the Thessalonians -- a period when the Gentile power, which was given by God into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, will be found in direct league with Satan, in open blasphemy and idolatry -- a period when the Jews, except a faithful remnant, will fall down and worship a man, who opposes and exalts himself against God -- a period too when those who are faithful to the living and true God will have to seal their testimony by their own blood. But all this is more fully brought out in the book of Revelation, to which we will now turn. As I have said, the Revelation is a book of results -everything is there seen in full bloom. The whole anti-Christian system is there brought out. God and His adversaries there meet. The rightful heir -- the Lord Jesus -- is there seen. In the thirteenth chapter the mystery of iniquity is fully developed. Two instruments of evil, under direct Satanic power, are brought before us. The first and second verses give us the origin and connections of the first beast. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority (Rev. 13:1, 2).

These verses, compared with the former part of the seventh of Daniel, show us that the qualities of the four empires are concentrated in him. His ten horns are also crowned, to show that he is the ruling power of the ten kingdoms. The names of blasphemy upon his heads also signify his antagonism to God. Observe also that the dragon, who, in the twelfth chapter, is said to be that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world {Rev. 12:9},

inspires the beast. The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

So that we must not look at the beast as simply man, but man unbridled and energized by the power and authority of Satan. We know that Satan entered into Judas. We see there a sample of his ways. From that moment he was so set against Christ, that he went out from his presence; and was so bent upon consummating his evil purpose, that Jesus said, What thou doest, do quickly {John 13:27}.

He betrayed him with a kiss! No marvel then that such diabolical and deceivable ways will be practised by man on the earth by-and-by, when all the malice of Satan, and all the unrestrained enmity of man's heart are combined. We can understand too, I think, why he has such general popularity that all the world wondered after the beast {Rev. 13:3}.

There may be a rebuff, one of his heads, as it were, wounded to death {Rev. 13:3};

but he will soon recover. 9 His deadly wound will be healed, and all the world wonder after him. Satan has always been ambitious of being worshipped; and he will have it then. You remember he proposed giving all his power and glory to Jesus, if He would worship him. But the Lord of glory resisted the foul offer. Not so by-and-by. There will be plenty of devil worshipers then. We are told, in the fourth verse, And they worshipped the dragon, [that is, the devil, as we have seen] which gave power unto the beast (Rev. 14:4).

The beast is worshipped too. They worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? {Rev. 14:4}.

Alas! this suits man, to own subjection to one who can show his power in establishing human greatness in this sin-stricken and impenitent world. Man loves to see greatness, glory, and power in connection with himself as a sinner, and the old creation accredited in its present ruin. The people would gladly have made Jesus king on those terms. They felt how advantageous it would be to themselves to have a king who could work such miracles as to feed thousands on five barley loaves and two fishes; and this purely selfish consideration led them to wish they could have Jesus for a king. But His kingdom was not of this world. Man's mind must be changed, the question of sin and guilt must be righteously settled, before He could take His rightful place as king over all the earth. Satan's way is to ignore, if possible, the question of sin; to exalt himself and man; to oppose God and deny Christ; and when this deep mystery of iniquity,

so long at work, is fully ripe, then will be strikingly manifested the awful truth of the words his foul breath uttered in the holy ear of the Son of God, when he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it {Luke 4:6}.

How seriously we should regard the principles so actively at work in our day, of exalting man and making so little of God and of Christ; for we see where they must ere long end. But the characteristics of this first beast are further described in the fifth and following verses. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two

months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations (Rev. 13:5-7).

The beast, then, is emphatically a blasphemer. He blasphemes God, and blasphemes the dwellers in heaven; he oppresses and overcomes the saints; and oh, how terrible! he has power given to him; only think of this,

9. {The wound of death will occur in the middle of Daniel's 70th week. See the pamphlet by A. C. Brown, *The Revelation Chronologically Arranged* (available from Present Truth Publishers), where this is discussed in detail.}

power given to him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

How peculiarly solemn this is! He is, however, only to continue forty and two months,

or three years and a half. All this very much corresponds with the description given of the "little horn" in the seventh chapter of Daniel. There is, however, a most terrible addition here. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

This is a little of what is coming upon the earth. This is where many are eagerly rushing. But the power of the great deceiver will be so great, that none shall escape being drawn into the vortex of this diabolical snare, whose names are not written in the book of life. The saints then will have to manifest patience, and to exercise faith; and the Spirit adds a most seasonable word -If any man have an ear, let him hear {Rev. 13:9}.

How gracious of God, not only to give us such details of things soon coming upon the world, but to exhort us to have a hearing ear, in order that we may now maintain a path of active separation from all the principles of antichrist that surround us! All this, beloved friends, reads deep, practical lessons to our hearts. The second beast seen in this chapter, who is also called in the nineteenth chapter the false prophet {Rev. 19:20},

is leagued with the first in this master-piece of diabolical deception. It is very important to notice that he exerciseth all [not some, but all] the power of the first beast {Rev. 13:12};

not a wit less in power than the first, to whom Satan gave his power, his seat, and great authority. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed (Rev. 11:12).

Observe, he is a false prophet. He has not ten horns, but two horns like a lamb, -- outwardly lamb-like, but really Satanic; he spake as a dragon.

In this way he deceives. There is the entire absence of divine truth. It is a lying agency of Satan's. Jesus said in Matt. 24 that there would be false Christs and false prophets; and men who hearken not to

Christ's words, and love not the truth, will fall into this fatal snare. There are three ways in which he will deceive those who dwell on the earth. First, he will do the same thing that Elijah did to prove that the God of Israel is the living God in a time of idolatry and departure from God, -- he brought fire down from heaven, you will remember, to consume the sacrifice. Hence, we are told in the thirteenth verse, that he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men (Rev. 13:13).

Secondly, he will work miracles. We know that our Lord in the fifth of John, thirty-sixth verse, referred to the works that he did in His Father's name as proof that He came forth from God; and Peter, when preaching to the Jews on the day of Pentecost,

referred to this same point as a testimony of God's approval. He said, Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know (Acts 2:22).

We read also of this lawless one in the second chapter of the second of Thessalonians, that his coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders {2 Thess. 2:9}.

Thirdly, he will give breath (not life, but breath; see margin) to an image which the people should make, and also cause it to speak. Can we conceive a deeper deception? Can we imagine how any can escape this snare of the fowler untaught and unaided by the Spirit of God? What help will abstruse reasoning and the refinements of philosophy be then? Why reason must conclude that he is the Messiah, a true prophet of God. Reason must say, he does what Elijah did, he does what Christ did; yea, (though not allowed to give life,) he gives to a carved idol of man's devising breath and speech; And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give breath 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 image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (Rev. 13:14-17).

Once more, I ask, beloved friends, is it possible to identify this description with the abominations of popery? Time rolls rapidly on, and soon these prophetic lines will be realities on the earth. Observe, too, the impossibility of neutrality in that day. Some men now try to hide themselves under the plea of "making no profession at all," and pride themselves on it, little thinking that by this they openly refuse allegiance to Christ. But there can be no neutrality in the days of the man of sin.

None can escape; they must either have the mark of the beast {Rev. 16:2; 19:20},

or be persecuted or slaughtered with the faithful remnant. From all that we have seen in these Scriptures as to the characteristics of this Satanic iniquity, we can understand how effective his entry into covenant with the Jews may be, and how easily he may obtain the kingdom by flatteries, before he is openly revealed in the midst of the week, when he will cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and

the idol will be set up in the holy place -- the abomination of desolation. But, further, we must remember that God always overrules man's ways, and Satan's too, for the accomplishment of His own counsels and purposes. All this evil therefore is permitted and overruled to carry out God's will. God is in all this sending upon men strong delusion {2 Thess. 2:11}.

God sent His beloved Son the faithful witness, and men rejected Him; they shall, therefore, in retributive justice, receive a false witness. They refused the truth, they shall now believe a lie. They saw no beauty in the true Christ, they shall wonder after a false one. They would not have Him, in whose mouth was no guile, they shall therefore receive the lie of the deceiver and think it is truth. The fact is, that God has given His truth not to amuse the intellect, but to win the heart; not to exalt man, but for the glory of Christ. It is to be feared that many still trifle with divine truth. They talk about it, raise questions about it, but do not receive it in the love of it. Hence this fearful judgment of God in this terrible delusion. These very miracles of the beast and lying wonders, under direct inspiration of Satan, will be allowed, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved {2 Thess. 2:10}. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness {2 Thess. 2:11, 12}.

This is a very remarkable expression -received not the love of the truth.

It is a word for the heart and conscience. It does not say, "because they did not profess to be Christians," or "because they did not go to the sacrament," as it is called, or "because they did not know the way of salvation." No, God searches the heart. Whatever knowledge they had, or profession they made, they had no love of the truth, that they might be saved. It is easy to say, "I have been neglectful, I must turn over a new leaf," and the like; but that does not do for God. The testimony of His blessed gospel is the ministry of divine, perfect love. It tells us that God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16}.

And the soul that receives this wondrous love of God in Christ His Son, "receives the truth in love." It comes to the heart of such as a message of richest mercy, and thus begets love in the heart to God. That it is the most blessed and essential truth of Christianity the apostle John declares, when he says, We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

Real, vital Christianity is love. God's love to the sinner is manifested in the death of His beloved Son; and the soul that really believes on Him for salvation must therefore receive the love of the truth into his heart. Observe, beloved friends, it is "the truth," not men's opinions, but God's word. Thy word is truth {John 17:17},

said Jesus. This is what men are now rejecting; and God will send this strong delusion

on account of it. He will permit Satan, through the false Christ, to publish a lie, which they will receive: they will be deceived by the lying wonders {2 Thess. 2:9}.

Do think, beloved friends, on the vast solemnity of this point. Already its shadow may be stealing quietly on, and the blinding process almost ready to begin. It may be that the hardened conscience and unimpressible heart -- alas! so manifest -- combine

to show that the time is not far distant when the dark curtain will drop and envelop men's minds, when darkness indeed will cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. As we have seen, the delusion will be overpowering -- it will be a snare that shall come upon all the dwellers upon earth. What makes it so very awful, is the fact that God sends it. God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness {2 Thess. 2:11, 12}.

You see then, beloved friends, what is coming upon men before long, and that too when they are full of wonder and delight at the greatness and power of "the beast." Surely the wise of this world will then be taken in their own craftiness. A few faithful ones will be owning God in this time of open blasphemy and infidelity. Jewish saints we know (but in faithfulness to the God of their fathers) will refuse to fall down and worship the beast. The result will be that some will be put to death; others will escape, or be brought through. God will stand by and sustain them, as He always does those who trust in Him. The three men who were cast into the fiery furnace, because they would not dishonor God by falling down and worshiping the image which Nebuchadnezzar set up, are strikingly typical of this faithful band of Israelites. After we are gone they will be raised up, and their testimony will be suitable for a time when God will be again specially dealing with people on the earth. God has generally had a witness in the world, and He will have it to the end. After the Church is gone the Spirit of God will begin to work in a remnant of Jews, and inspire them with Jewish hopes, according to the fathers and the prophets. They will refuse to pay homage to the false Messiah, and the image set up. Their hope will be that the God of Abraham and of David will soon send the promised Messiah; that God will fulfil His word in setting His king upon the holy hill of Zion. We find in some of the Psalms their earnest cries to Jehovah to deliver them from their persecutors. In the Psa. 79 they cry, O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place {Psa. 79:1-7}.

They are recognized as being on Jewish ground from the imprecatory character of their cries. It was a righteous thing for a Jew to call for vengeance upon his enemies, and it will be again when the Jew comes upon the scene as such. Now a Jew who believes God's testimony about Christ ceases at once to be a Jew; for he is baptized into the body of Christ, he belongs to the Church of God; and a Christian is instructed to bless them that curse him, to recompense to no man evil for evil; he is told to overcome evil with good: If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink &c. {Rom. 12:20, 21},

But, according to Old Testament Scriptures, the guiding principle was an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth {Matt. 5:38};

it is no marvel then that we find such cries in the Psalms, that God might be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed {Psa. 79:10}.

In the 80th Psalm, they are seen again crying for salvation. They most touchingly appeal to the Shepherd of Israel {Psa. 80:1};

they feel the fiery persecution long and wearisome; they are conscious of not being in the place of blessing proper to God's people. They cry, Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours; and our enemies laugh among themselves. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved {Psa. 80:3-7}.

They liken their cruel oppressor to a wild boar out of the wood, or a wild beast, wasting and devouring the vine which God brought out of Egypt. They therefore cry in the 14th and following verses, Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved {Psa. 80 14:19}.

We have here, I believe, those who are referred to in the thirteenth of Revelation, -Here is the patience and the faith of the saints {Rev. 13:10}.

In standing up for the God of Israel, at a time when infidelity has a world-wide popularity, they will be connected, as we may suppose, with the severest trials of patience and of faith. Some will have to seal their testimony with their blood, and having lost their longed-for inheritance on earth, will have a place given them in heaven. This is why it will be said at that time, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth {Rev. 14:13}.

Others, like Noah, will be brought through this great tribulation, and then enjoy the blessing on earth which follows. I do not doubt that the 144 thousand seen standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb are the spared saints of this time of trouble. No one can imagine what the severity of this great tribulation {Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14}

will be. Our Lord said it will be such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be {Matt. 24:21}.

This is enough to show its deep unparalleled oppression and sorrow. Thank God, mercy will even then rejoice against judgment, for many will be saved out of it. Not only a remnant of

Israel, which we have been considering, but that countless multitude which John saw of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,

in the seventh of Revelation, will come out of the great tribulation, as the 14th verse tells us. What a glorious salvation! They will owe it all of course to the blood of the Lamb, as all who are brought into blessing before God must; for on no other ground can blessing be secured. But there is another point I must refer to before concluding this lecture. It is the complete overthrow of this diabolical work. The lawless one is destroyed; not by the Church, but by the personal coming of the Lord. Instead of finding the world converted, the Lord will find it as it was in the days of Noah; and as they knew not until it was too late, -until the flood came and took them all away {Matt. 24:39},

-- so ignorant and unprepared will men be when the Lord is revealed from heaven. Instead of truth prevailing, it will be Satan's lie. Instead of Christianity, it will be infidelity. The beast will be worshiped, and the false prophet be beguiling the people by miracles, especially by having given breath to the image which had been made and placed in the temple. But beside this, as we have seen, the Lord will find a few faithful ones, upon whom He will arise as the Sun of Righteousness {Mal. 4:2}

with healing in His wings, to establish them in the promised blessings of their own land. But He will come in flaming fire, and with the besom of destruction, upon those who know not God and have obeyed not His gospel. Before the Lord Jesus comes out of heaven to execute wrath upon the living wicked, this remarkable working of Satan's will have been in operation, so as to bring to a focus, as it were, the people of the habitable world in association with the beast. Satan, no doubt, believes that "union is strength"; but God, who permits everything to work for the furtherance of His own purposes, allows even this, in order that the consummation of wickedness in these last days, may be at once judged, and receive the righteous indignation, and wrath of the Son of man, to whom all judgment is committed. Not only are we informed that the wide and deep Euphrates will be dried up, so as to facilitate the confederation of the eastern and western powers, but three emissaries of Satan will be sent forth to accomplish a manifested union of the anti-Christian powers. In the sixteenth of Revelation we read, And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty {Rev. 16:13}.

Thus we see three unclean spirits, spirits of devils, working unobtrusively like frogs, exercising miraculous power, issuing from the mouth of Satan, the beast and the false prophet, and so acting on the kings of the whole habitable world as to centralize its power, and bring about the awful crisis of Armageddon. This being done, the masterpiece of diabolical iniquity on the earth seems complete. Satan, who has been an imitator all through,

now glories in a trinity of evil -- the beast, the false prophet, and the image. 10It comes up as a stench in the nostrils of God. The little remnant of faithful ones on earth have been crying to the God of Abraham for vengeance, with the oft-repeated How long? {Rev. 6:10}.

Their sighs and groans have been heard in heaven. The time has thus arrived when Jesus should personally come in flaming fire and take vengeance. And this ripened iniquity of human and Satanic abomination will demand the most summary and severe judgment. Jesus will grapple at once with “the beast” and “the false prophet,” and plunge both alive into the lake of fire. But observe, so inveterate is the enmity against God and hatred to Christ on the part of this son of perdition {2 Thess. 2:3}

and his associates, that the foul climax is reached by their confederating together to go out to meet the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS and His glorified followers when they come out of heaven. So involved will the kings of the earth and their armies be in this strong delusion {2 Thess. 2:11},

that they will madly oppose the only Potentate to the last. Alas! alas! for man, when given up to the deception of the great adversary. All this is fully brought out in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation. Let us read from the eleventh verse to the end. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING of KINGS, AND LORD of LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun: and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, 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 that wrought miracles before him, with which he 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. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth and all the fowls were filled with their flesh (Rev. 19:11-21).

10. {Actually, the image is of the first beast. The evil triad that will be worshiped is the first beast (the head of the revived Roman empire), the Antichrist (the second beast of Rev. 13), and Satan.}

This is a pre-millennial scene, or rather, it ushers in the day of the Lord. The first act of Christ's reign appears to be this summary judgment on the living. The heads of this violent outrage are consigned at once to their eternal doom. The others are slain, and will be raised again from the dead, and finally judged at the great white throne. We should have expected, from the portion we read in the Thessalonians, that this judgment would be special on the lawless one and at once, when the Lord came; for it is said,

as you are, and come now! Oh, that the language of some dear souls at this time may be --

whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming {2 Thess. 2:8}.

Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away {Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33}.

How clear is it, then, that the Antichrist is not to be destroyed by the Church, or overcome by the gospel! To suppose either is a great mistake. No, beloved friends, we are here to witness for Christ, to obey His word, and to follow Him; but that passage we hear so often misapplied, He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet {1 Cor. 15:25},

has not yet began to have its accomplishment. When the Lord reigns, we shall reign with Him. Now He is preaching the gospel of divine grace to every creature. When He rises up and shuts the door, and comes forth in flaming fire, it will be to reign in righteousness, and judge with equity. Then there will be rejoicing in heaven, as we find in the eleventh of Revelation, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. . . . We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned {Rev. 11:15-17}.

I repeat, that now Jesus is ministering, by His servants, the gospel of redeeming grace, saying, Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

Still His arms are wide open to receive and save to the uttermost every sinner that comes to Him. Happy those who now take Jesus at His word, who believe to the saving of their souls. A little while, and everything around us will be turned upside down. The patience and longsuffering of God will reach its utmost limit; the measure of man's iniquity be full. The world will have reached its climax of evil. Now, thank God, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life; but in a little while Christ will take His great power and reign. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. Then men will be judged in righteousness, and ruled with a rod of iron. Well might the prophet enquire, Who may abide the day of His coming? {Mal. 3:2}.

Who, we may ask, can stand before the omniscient eye of a sinhating God? If ever there was a time when we should urge sinners to flee from the wrath to come {Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7},

it is now. If any say, Where? we reply, to the open arms of the Son of God; for He is still able to save all that come unto God by Him. I earnestly beseech you, unsaved ones, to receive Jesus as your Savior at once. Delay not. Now God is saving sinners through Christ; to-morrow may be too late. If any of you say, How must I come to Jesus? I reply, Just as you are, in your sin and guilt and ruin, with all the burden of a guilty conscience; come

“Just as I am, and waiting not To rid my soul of one dark blot, To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come.”

May the Lord grant His blessing on our hasty glance at some of the awful realities coming upon men! His word is truth. Jesus said,

The subject is solemn, weighty, and important. We have all much to learn about it. My address to-night is little more than a few fragmentary and suggestive remarks. Let us search the Word of God prayerfully on the subject. We shall find it very extensively scattered over the range of Scripture. Like all revealed truth, it is sanctifying to the believer. The reason why God's children do not get more blessing is because men's opinions are looked at so much, instead of God's truth being searched in prayerful dependance on the Holy Ghost. May He bless all His dear saints!