

The Antichrist

E. A. Wilson

Lessons On

THE ANTICHRIST

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PART 1

Will Antichrist Make a Covenant With the Jews?

Matthew 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to spew him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake,

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:

17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day:

21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

22 And except those days should be shortened, there should a no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Take Heed

Jesus mixed many things together in these twenty-two verses. The disciples had asked Him when these things were going to take place: the literal destruction of Jerusalem, what would be the sign of His coming, and the sign of the end. Note how Jesus gave an answer to these precise questions. After they asked these questions, Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you" (verse 4). These three questions cover the area of more deceptive teaching than any other part of the Word of God.

The second coming of Christ is of utmost importance to every Christian. We know it is very important because of the prominent place it holds in the teaching in the New Testament. The majority of Christians believe in the second coming of Christ; they rest their hope in it. However, when we begin to teach and explain the events that will precede the second coming, men become divided.

Christ told us to "Take heed. . . ." The Apostle Paul, in 1 Timothy 4:16 tells us, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

Second Timothy 4:1-4 reads: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Paul said in Titus 1:14, "Not giving heed to Jewish fables." Many of the teachings which are being brought forth so prominently today are old Jewish fables that the Jews started when they rejected Christ and truth. Men are trying to use some of the happenings of the time to prove that it is marking the second coming of Christ. Nevertheless, many of them are not something new; it is merely those Jewish fables being set forth again.

Someone may ask, "Where do Jewish fables come from?" After returning from exile in Babylonian captivity, the Jews went back to build the temple. When they returned, the Jewish teachers (called scribes) rose to preeminence. Those scribes were to do nothing but copy the Law and hand out the copies. Yet, they took a more preeminent position. They not only copied the Law, but they formulated and detailed rules which were later called the oral law or the tradition of the elders.

The oral law or tradition of the elders was that which hung Christ to the Cross. We read in John 19:6-7, when Jesus was brought before him, Pilate said: ". . . I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die. . . ." It was not a Mosaic Law nor was it a law which God had given. Where did that law come from? It was formulated by those individuals who had become too preeminent in themselves. They added to and took away as it was pleasing to them. Yes, it was that law which sent Christ to the Cross.

We must be careful or we can formulate a law of our own. You cannot find anywhere in the Bible that says you commit sin if you go to the hospital. Yet some people will break fellowship if your faith is weak and you go to a hospital. My friend, we are letting preeminent spirit get hold of us when we feel that we can add to the principles of God's Word and bind it as law on God's people.

What does this have to do with the lesson? Well, it was in this uninspired collection of traditions that the millennium theory was formulated. Did you ever study and see who first taught it? The millennium teaching was first written down in the Talmud, which the scribes had formulated. Webster's definition of the Talmud says it is the book that contains the whole body of Jewish laws and traditions which the commentaries and the speculation of the rabbis set forth. The Talmud is where you first find a future reign of Christ on the earth being taught. It never was in the Bible nor in God's plan.

The Bible emphatically declares the preeminence of Jesus Christ in all things. According to Jesus' Words in John 12:48, to reject His Words is to invite peril. Only Christ has the authority to introduce a doctrine to which His followers must adhere. Outside of Christ, the Word has been sealed. Jesus Christ, alone, is God's mouthpiece for this day in which we are living. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things . . ." (Hebrews 1:1-2).

As the Apostle Paul saw men and women so quickly removed from the Gospel and the plain teachings of Jesus, he said, ". . . who hath bewitched you . . ." (Galatians 3:1). What bewitched them? A false spirit. We are not fearful enough of false doctrine. With false teaching there is a bewitching, false spirit, whereby we can be so quickly removed from the pure Gospel. Just as the Holy Spirit convinces unbelieving people of the truth through the power of the Holy Spirit, even so these bewitching spirits work with false teachings to deceive people.

Truth Brings Freedom

I want to make a statement which you may not accept, but please stay with me. The very thought of Jewish priority is out of the question. Many thousands of dollars have been wasted trying to favor a people

whom God is not showing any favor to, people whom God has put a curse on. It is needful that we study these things. Jewish heresies that worked against the prophets of the morning church are still working through Jewish fables to destroy the effectiveness of the preaching of the Word of God.

Any modern Jewish writer will tell you their belief has not changed. They are still expecting a messianic kingdom on this earth with a restoration of a temple, animal sacrifices, and Old Testament priesthood. Their books say that John the Baptist and Jesus Christ did not proclaim such a kingdom. I have nothing in my heart against any individual; I only want to declare the truth as it really is. Only the truth will make us free.

The Book of Daniel is the seed-ground of all the teachings of the supposed-to-be millenniums and antichrists sitting in the temple in Jerusalem. It is the book that is used to affirm the belief that the literal Jews are supposedly still God's people. There are four Scriptures (Daniel 9:24-27) from which most of this teaching has been derived from.

I will prove to you as I go along that millennialists actually put words in the Bible that are not there. Doctor Scofield's Bible is a good Bible; it is a King James Version. However, if you will read the prefix, it tells that he had taken the privilege of "adding to" it. On many pages there are paragraphs of his thoughts, and people today are accepting them. Doctor Scofield was far from the truth in his theory. He was a literalist. He was a postponement man. He did not believe in the spiritual kingdom at all.

Remember, God's people had failed Him and were carried away in Babylonian captivity. God, through the Prophet Jeremiah (Chapter 25), foretold the seventy years captivity. The seventy years were nearly expired, and Daniel was troubled in his heart about the future so he began to fast and pray. As he fasted and prayed, God sent Gabriel out of Heaven with a message that seventy weeks were determined on his people. In other words, when these seventy weeks were accomplished, literal Israel would no longer be a special people to God.

We are going to prove, by the Scripture, when the seventy weeks were. After Gabriel came down and gave him the prophecy, we do not read any more about Gabriel until it was time for it (the prophecy) to be fulfilled. Then out of Heaven came Gabriel to tell Zacharias, ". . . thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son . . ." (Luke 1:13). He went from Zacharias' house over to Mary's house. He said, ". . . thou shalt . . . bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS . . ." (Luke 1:31).

The Prophecy Is Given

This prophecy was in Gabriel's hand; God did not trust man to bear it. Old Zacharias asked, "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God . . ." (Luke 1:18-19). I believe Gabriel knows more about God than you and I do. So, keep your eyes on Gabriel, and you will know when the fulfillment came. God sent Gabriel back when it was time for the seventy weeks to move into fulfillment.

Let us read Daniel 9:24-27: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [or seven and sixty-two is sixty-nine weeks] the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

This is a definite prophecy. Some things were definitely determined through the foreknowledge of God. This ninth chapter of Daniel is probably the most significant utterance in Bible prophecy that involves a time element.

God sent Gabriel from Heaven to tell Daniel at least four things: how long He would yet work with old Israel, how long He would remain in their Holy City, how long it would be until Messiah comes, and what He would definitely do in His Advent.

Time Elements

When we begin to study these seventy weeks, there are two things that need to be determined to understand this prophecy. We need to know how the time is figured. What does seventy weeks actually mean? How long is a week in this prophecy? We need to realize seventy weeks in this prophecy are actually weeks of years, each week containing seven years. This may be new to us, but to the Jew it was very understandable. God's people in Judah understood these week-years.

In Leviticus 25:8 we see that the Jewish sabbatic year was divided into week-years, each week containing seven years. We read in Genesis 29:27, where Laban, Jacob's father-in-law, deceived him and gave him Leah to wife when he wanted Rachel. Then Laban said, "Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years." Verse twenty-eight tells us, "And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week [or seven years]. . . ."

So, seventy weeks with seven years per week equals 490 years. When Daniel talks about seventy weeks, he is talking about 490 years. In other words, we can put it in plain language: 490 years were determined on old Israel. Within this 490 years, the old temple was going to be destroyed and God was going to come, die, and confirm the new covenant.

When Gabriel gave this to Daniel, he divided it into seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks is sixty-nine weeks. Then he said there would be one week after that. He also told us that during the first seven weeks (or forty-nine years), God's people would be released to leave Babylon, go and build the city, and build the temple in troublous times.

That first seven weeks (or forty-nine years) covered the time from Daniel to Malachi. You can read of it in Ezra and Nehemiah. They will tell you that the walls were built in troublous times. Following the seven weeks were to be sixty-two weeks which is 434 years. This covers the time from Malachi to John the Baptist or to Christ in His first Advent. The first sixty-nine weeks (seven plus sixty-two) will bring you up to this first Advent or dispensation of Jesus Christ.

It is strange that most Bible teachers will agree on the happenings of the sixty-nine weeks. Millennialists even go along with the sixty-nine weeks. History has proven that the words Gabriel gave to Daniel were carried out just that way.

However, the seventieth week is where the trouble begins. The seventieth week brings confusion, yet there is no need of it. Let me repeat it again: The first seven weeks were from Daniel to Malachi. The next sixty-two weeks (434 years) were from Malachi to John the Baptist. Was the prophecy sealed up? Nobody heard a word from God from Malachi to John the Baptist (over four hundred years).

Now, where do we start to reckon these 490 years? Daniel 9:25 tells us, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks. . . ." It will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; that is sixty-nine weeks. From the commandment to restore and build old Jerusalem and the temple until the Messiah comes will be sixty-nine weeks.

When was the commandment given? In Ezra we read that in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, the commandment was given for the people to be released to return to Jerusalem and build the temple. Artaxerxes reign was from 464 B.C. to 425 B.C. When we subtract seven from 464 B.C., we get 457 B.C. That is when the commandment was given; that is the starting point, 457 B.C.

Again, if we take seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, we get sixty-nine weeks or 483 years (sixty-nine times seven gives you 483 years). Subtract 483 from 457, when the commandment was given, and we get A.D. 26. Every Bible student knows they were four years too late, or they held B.C. four years too long. A.D. should have started four years before it did. When we put that four years on A.D. 26, it brings us right up to A.D. 30. This is when Christ was anointed and baptized by John the Baptist, and God spoke out of Heaven. We can read of this anointing in Acts 10:38.

The Seventieth Week Is History

Now, we want to focus our thinking on the thought of antichrist making a covenant with the literal Jews. Let us look into God's eternal Word and see if the Bible even hints such a thing. There is a lot of talk about one antichrist appearing and making a covenant with the Jews in the seven years. The seven years is this seventieth week. I am going to prove that it is past and gone: two thousand years ago.

False teachers tell you it is going to happen any day. The seventieth week is the seven years of tribulation they talk about. How do they get it way out there? Isn't it strange that when this seven and sixty-two weeks followed week after week of this prophecy consecutively, that when God gets up to the last week He would move it off two thousand years later?

Every time I think about that, I think about a clown I saw one time at a fair. Everything was going on so fast, and he was about as simple a looking fellow as you have ever seen. He ran up to the microphone and said, "Hold it, hold it! I just got a message from President Eisenhower. He wants everybody to know that following Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday will come Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Thank you!" Well, I am here to tell you that following the sixty-ninth week was the seventieth week. There is no postponement.

Doctor Scofield actually declared that the prophets stood on mountain peaks to see these things. That thought alone is false. No prophet wrote what he saw; he wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. In this case, Daniel wrote as Gabriel gave it to him.

In Genesis where Moses wrote, "And God said, Let the waters . . . be gathered together . . . and it was so . . ." (Genesis 1:9). Now, tell me where Moses was standing when he saw all the waters come together. After you tell me where he was standing, I am going to prove to you that he wrote it two thousand years after it happened. Moses wrote Genesis two thousand years after the creation. The great move through false religion is to take the olivine quality out of the Word of God and bring it down to a rationalistic state. That seventieth week followed the sixty-ninth week, consecutively.

It is claimed, according to Daniel 9:27, that antichrist will make a covenant with the Jews for seven years. (This is the only Scripture any of them use to teach that theory.) This covenant will allow them to offer animal sacrifices in a rebuilt, Jewish temple in Jerusalem. In the midst of the week (halfway through it), that tribulation period, he will break his covenant and set himself up as God in the temple.

Now, friend, I do not say this with any animosity toward anyone, but there is not a single one of such things as I have mentioned to be found in Daniel 9:27. It not only does not teach it, it does not even hint it.

Who Is "He"?

If there is nothing there that teaches about antichrist, what is Daniel teaching? Well, let us read Daniel 9:27, "And he. . . ." This is where all the trouble is. People already have a projected idea of who "he" is. Millennialists actually teach that "he" is the antichrist. Yet, there is nothing in verse twenty-seven about antichrist. If we can know who "he" is, we can know the truth of the matter.

Then who is "he" that Gabriel was talking about when he said, "And he shall confirm the covenant . . . "? Many say it is antichrist, but the word he is a pronoun. Wherever there is a pronoun in English writing, there is always a noun which lets you know who the pronoun is. Verse twenty-seven said, "And he. . . ." Who is it? The subject of verse twenty-five and twenty-six has been about the Messiah; that has been the whole subject. Needless to say, when he came to verse twenty-seven, he did not have to say, "And the Messiah"; he simply said, "And he . . ."—that same "he" whom I have been talking about. Can't you see how devilish this millennial doctrine is?

Who is "he"? My friend, "He" is the Messiah. Verse twenty-five tells us, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince [with a capital P. Let us not get these princes mixed up. When the Bible refers to Christ it uses a capital P. When it talks about Titus it uses a little p.] . . ." Gabriel did not come down from Heaven to tell people that antichrist was going to set up something in the temple; he came down to tell about Jesus, the Messiah.

How do we know "he" is the Messiah? Just read verse twenty-seven again, "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. . . ." He (Christ) came A.D. 26 to 30. That week was to be seven years; that would take it to 33 A.D. The Scripture says, ". . . in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. . . ." Did He do it? He preached three and one-half years and then, right in the midst of the week, went to Calvary. When He died on the Cross, the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, God moved out, and the old oblation ceased-right in the midst of the week. Christ offered Himself once and for all: the only sacrifice for sin.

Why did He cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease? The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. He went to Calvary's Cross, shed His life's blood, and put an end to the Old Testament sacrifice for time and eternity.

Some people feel that "he" might have been that other prince, Titus. If you will read those three verses, you will see that there is no way that it could have been Titus. First of all, Prime Titus is spoken of without a capital letter. If they think it was Titus, then "he" is not antichrist. If it was Titus, they cannot teach that it is cut in the future because that happened in A.D. 70.

A New, Literal Temple?

Another point we need to understand is that no reference of a yet, future temple being built in Jerusalem is mentioned whatsoever. These verses are used to teach it, but there is no mention in these verses of a new temple being built in Jerusalem.

To understand this prophecy, you must go back to some things I stated in the beginning. At the time this prophecy was given to Jeremiah (you can read about it in Daniel 9:2), Israel was to be in Babylonian captivity seventy years. Remember, the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and Israel was carried away to Babylonian captivity. Daniel was in Babylon when he received this understanding. Here is their situation: They were carried away. They were slaves. God released them so they could return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. When does the sixty-nine weeks begin--from the time the commandment was given of God to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

The Jews went back and rebuilt it because ". . . the people had a mind to work" (Nehemiah 4:6). That temple was standing when Jesus came. (We read about it in Matthew 24.) It had had some modifications but was the same temple. Jesus walked out of it and left it desolate, and in A. D. 70, it was torn down. Nobody can find anywhere in prophecy where it says that there would ever be another one built. The one which was to be built was the one that Jesus worked in. There is nothing in prophecy that talks about a later temple than the one Titus tore down.

Daniel 9:26 tells us this temple would be destroyed. Let us read verse 26, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself [this is when Christ went to the Cross] : and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."

Who are the people? The Romans. Who is the prince? Titus. When did it happen? A.D. 70. So, that temple which was rebuilt was torn down A.D. 70. No one can find a prophecy which states that there would be another temple built. Millennialists have misused that prophecy (Daniel 9:26) to talk about a future temple.

We Have Salvation--NOW

Finally, my friend in order to place Daniel 9:27 in the future, millennialists hold to the idea that a great gap exists between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth week. However, the seventieth week follows right behind the sixty-ninth week. How can we know when the seventieth week came? God sent Gabriel out of Heaven. Gabriel informed Daniel that sixty-nine weeks had been fulfilled and the seventieth was drawing near; it was time for Messiah to come! People are waiting for that time to be fulfilled, yet Gabriel tells us that the time has been fulfilled. That is why he made another trip from Heaven.

The Scripture declares that all the basic parts of the seventieth week have already been fulfilled. All sixty-nine weeks measure to Christ's appearance or His anointing. In the week that followed the sixty-ninth week, Christ was cut off in the midst of the week.

Now study with me. It was His death that caused the oblation to cease. Here we will get into some reasons why this millennial teaching is so terrible. If the seventieth week has not come yet (which dispensationalists and millennialists teach), then we have no salvation and we are foolish to be building church buildings. Why? He was not cut off until in the midst of the seventieth week. If the seventieth week has not come, He has not died yet, He has not risen yet, and we have no salvation.

What do false prophets teach? They teach that He has come and died. They teach that salvation is here now, and then they turn right around and say the seventieth week has not come. Well, if it has not come, how has salvation come? These things are false, and the devil is sitting back laughing. People are in bad shape who are held under false teaching, and only the truth will make them free.

One false doctrine lays a foundation for another false doctrine. Did you ever stop to think where the teaching of Christ having to make at least two more appearances came from? The Bible teaches, ". . . once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself "(Hebrews 9:26). He is going to appear a second time; that is all.

The Rapture

Where did man get this idea? When you already have a thought within your mind, you can find a Scripture to prop up your idea. On the contrary, take it from prophecy, from the Law, from Gospel Revelation, and chain it all together; if it is truth, it will hook up. Hebrews 9:26, 28 tell us, ". . . once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . . and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Millennialists teach that He is only coming the second time for those who look for Him, that He is just coming to rapture the church away. Please read the Scripture again. It says, ". . . and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." He is going to appear to His true people, not dealing with sin. Needless to say, He will not appear to the rest that way. The unrighteous will be brought to the Judgment, and their sins will be named out right before them. He will be dealing with sin to those who do not look for Him, who are not ready to meet Him.

Where did the foundation come for at least two more appearances of Christ? It came from this theory that antichrist is going to set up a place in Jerusalem in the temple, confirm or make a covenant, and then break it.

Someone may ask, "Why do they have to teach two appearances?" Because they admit that this prophecy given to Daniel by Gabriel deals with the literal Jews. God, through Gabriel, spoke to Daniel and said, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people [the literal Jew] . . ." (Daniel 9:24). Since they have to teach that this antichrist business and making a covenant is only for the literal Jew, they had to come in with the theory that Jesus is going to come and lift the Church away because the millennialists are not included in this. They teach that while antichrist makes a covenant with the literal Jew here on the earth, the Church will be caught up in the rapture.

Once again I want to say, there is not a thing in the Bible to substantiate the thought of Jesus coming, rapturing the church, and leaving the rest. The Bible plainly teaches that when He comes again, every eye will see Him—sinner and saint alike. Sinner and saint will both be caught up to a final judgment.

The Greatest Noise Ever Heard

What laid the foundation for the doctrine of the rapture? Millennialists paint a horrible picture of what a terrible tribulation it is going to be when God raptures the church away. Yet, you have never heard one of them preach on the rapture from 2 Peter the third chapter. They teach that He is going to silently take the church away, and it will be done before the sinner ever knows anything ever happened.

That is what they think? The Bible lets us know that when He appears, ". . . the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). You have never heard a noise like you are going to hear that morning. It will be so loud it will shake the dead out of their graves.

Millennialists talk about a man sleeping in the bed not hearing—people who have been dead for hundreds of years are going to hear it. The voice of the Son of God is going to speak, and the dead are going to come forth.

First Thessalonians 4:16-17 tells us the dead in Christ are going to rise first. First before what? Read verse 17, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds" Paul also tells us that, ". . . we which are alive and remain . . . shall not prevent them which are asleep . . ." (verse 15). The dead in Christ are going to rise with a new body first. Then we who are alive are going to be changed in a twinkling of an eye and be caught up together with them in the air to meet the Lord. We will not stay there seven years while the tribulation is going on, but forever we will be with the Lord. We are to comfort one another with these words.

"Where is the sinner going to be?" Well, according to millennial teachings, the church is going to be raptured up. The Jews are going to be gathered at Jerusalem where a new temple is to be built. (There is not any prophecy for this whatsoever, but they are bound to have it that way.) While they are there playing with antichrist and the church is up in the rapture, God is going to pour tribulation on the sinners (this is their teaching).

I repeat again: The foundation for any teaching of two second comings or two appearances of Christ in the future is false and is based on another false teaching which we have dealt with already. Somebody may ask, "Don't you ever think the Jews will gather back to Jerusalem? Don't you think there will ever be a temple built?" If I forsake my thoughts and take God's thoughts, I cannot think that way.

Why will it never be rebuilt? "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [during the seventieth week following the sixty-ninth week]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation [When is the consummation? The end, when this heaven and earth is consumed in fire.] . . ." (Daniel 9:27).

He left that old temple once and for all. It will be desolate unto the end. We would do well if we would receive the truth and line up with it. We must quit wasting our efforts, time, finance, and everything else trying to build up something which will never be built.

If the Jews were to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, offer the blood sacrifice, and have the old priesthood, what would that prove? Would the offering of an animal sacrifice be pleasing to God now? Would He get any glory out of an old, sinful priesthood going through ceremonies? If the Jews were allowed to go back to Jerusalem, rebuild the temple, and offer their sacrifice, all it could ever prove is how deceived they are and how far they would go in rejecting the Messiah.

There is nothing whatsoever to cause me to rejoice in learning that the Jews are going further in their unbelief. The thing that makes me rejoice is to hear of people who accept Christ and turn from Jewish fables to the truth. Let us hear of a people being filled with the Holy Ghost and realizing, just as the people did on Pentecost, that the atonement has already been made. You cannot have the Holy Ghost and expect an atonement out there somewhere. When the Holy Ghost comes in, He will convince you that Christ is the Messiah, that He is Lord, that He is King, and that He is Ruler, NOW!

The New, Living Temple

There is no prophecy anywhere which teaches that there will be another temple built in literal Jerusalem. However, there was another temple built. Jesus, when He left the other one desolate, said, ". . . I will build my church . . ." (Matthew 16:18). "What is this new temple?" She is The Church of God, a spiritual temple.

Jesus brought us a new covenant; He confirmed that covenant with signs following. He let us know it was true. He confirmed that covenant through His death. By His blood He purchased us from sin, and

when we were purchased from sin, we were made members of that new, spiritual house. It is called the new Jerusalem, and the new Jews are going there. Many people have already found the new Jerusalem; that beats the postponement theory all to pieces. That is one of the earmarks of Satan; he always wants to postpone.

Jesus came with the "now" Gospel. He said in John 5:25, ". . . The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God: and they that hear shall live." What does the devil want you to do? Postpone. Hell is inhabited with people who had good intentions of giving their life to God, but the devil came along with a postponement idea (put it off a little while).

Every blessing that Jesus Christ brought to us in this great redemption (beside a new body) is for us right now. Thank God, I am in the kingdom now! There is a new and living way opened up. You can be holy and live in the presence of God right now, while you are living.

If you are in sin, you do not have to stay there another minute. If you will hear His voice, you can live holy now. He did not say you would just be forgiven, but you can live free from sin. God is speaking to, souls now. He is resurrecting souls now. Salvation is the first resurrection. Then, thank God, the hour is coming when everyone who is in the grave is going to hear His voice. When He comes again, we are going to behold the second resurrection.

PART 2

The Great Tribulation

The False Story

Because Matthew mentioned there would be great tribulation at that time, dispensationalists pick it up and begin to talk about a seven-year period where three and one-half years of it will be in great tribulation. Their belief is that the Jews will be gathered to Palestine. There they are going to make a covenant with antichrist; he is going to let them offer their own sacrifices for three and one-half years. Then they pick up 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and try to tie it in and say antichrist is going to sit in the temple as God. While he occupies that position, there is going to be three and one-half years of "great tribulation" on the people who are left in the world. They then teach that Jesus is going to return a second time, put antichrist down, and reign in a glorious reign for one thousand years here on the earth. Now that is a beautiful story; the only thing wrong with it is—it is not true.

The Truth

Now, let us look at the truth. Daniel, in verse twenty-seven, talks about the overspreading of the abominations that would make the city desolate, but nowhere does he mention "tribulation."

One reason we misinterpret Scripture is because we read the Bible too fast. If you read verse twenty-six and twenty-seven carefully, it will definitely show you that this desolation is not included in the seventy weeks; it follows after the seventy weeks. The Messiah came the seventieth week, preached three and one-half years, and was cut off in the midst of the week. He confirmed the covenant mostly with His own people until they rejected it. Then He brought the Gentiles in.

About thirty years afterwards, Titus came in and destroyed the city. This abomination was not even in the seventy-week period. The abomination that made the city desolate took place several years later in A.D. 70. We need to realize, even though it was closely related with the seventy weeks, it was to follow.

This abomination that makes desolate was not to take place over the whole world but just in Judaea. In order to substantiate their story, millennialists say that everyone who is left in this world is going to suffer under this "Great Tribulation." Yet, the Bible teaches it was only to affect the people in Judaea.

Let us look at the "Great Tribulation" according to the Word of God. In Matthew 24:21 we read, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world. . . ." We have already proven to you that the seventieth week could not be in the future. Matthew 24:3 tells us, "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?" Jesus had told them that there was not going to be one stone left upon another of the old temple (verse 2), and they wanted to know when it was to happen.

He answered them in verses fifteen and twenty-one: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) . . . For then shall be great tribulation. . . ." Now, when is the "Great Tribulation"? In verse 15, Christ gave an unmistakable sign to tell us when. He said, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)." Understand what? That this is the "Great Tribulation" that Daniel was talking about.

Jesus Cared for All

When did the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place? Millennialists teach that this is the antichrist who is going to sit in the holiest of holies (God's place in the Jewish temple). Yet this could not be, for more than one reason.

First of all, Jesus said, "When ye . . . shall see; He was speaking to the common people, and no one but the high priest ever entered the holiest place. The people would never know when it took place if it were something in the secret place or the holiest.

Second, it is not a high priest or an idol set up in the holy place in the temple. He said, ". . . let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains" (verse 16). Now, if this is an idol set up by antichrist in the holy place and he has taken over that far, it would be too late to flee. They would already be bound. Therefore, it definitely had to be something that people could see.

He said, "Whoso readeth, let him understand." So, we know it is something one could read. They did not have a New Testament, so where did they read it? They read it from Daniel 9:24-27.

If you will study the history of the Gospel writers, you will find that Matthew wrote to the Jews. They well understood his writings. Luke wrote to the Gentile; he wrote in a different manner. Luke made expressions that are much easier for the Gentile man and woman to understand.

When Matthew wrote, "When ye . . . see the abomination . . . spoken of by Daniel . . . then . . . flee into the mountains," how were they going to see it? They had to read it in the Book. They had to see it in the Book. When they saw it in the Book and then saw it appearing, they knew it was time to go.

But there were Gentiles without God, without promise, and without a Book to read. God loved them, also. Gentiles came to Jesus and were saved while He walked here on the earth. Now, don't you think He would make a way for them to escape? They could not understand Daniel, nor did they have a Book to read.

When Luke wrote it, he made it plain and understandable to the Gentile. Let us read Luke 21:5-7: "And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down, And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?"

Matthew wrote, "When ye therefore see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet. . . ." Luke tells us what that abomination is not an antichrist nor an idol set up in the temple. What were they supposed to see? ". . . when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." (Luke 21:20-21). So, what was the sign that they were to flee to the mountains? When they saw the Roman armies starting to surround the city, they would know Daniel's prophecy was going to be fulfilled, that the city was going to be taken, and the temple was going to be made desolate.

The Great Tribulation Is History

Josephus wrote history in A.D. 75; he lived right in that day. Through his writings you can see how the hand of God worked. He said Titus and those armies so encompassed the city that it looked as though even the Christian was not going to escape. God moved on the armies and they withdrew two or three days, and the Christians fled. Then the armies moved in and took the city. The abomination that maketh desolate is the Roman armies under Titus, the prince: just exactly as Daniel said.

We have more reason to believe God and His Word than any people who have ever lived. When we study these things and see how every prophecy lines up and is fulfilled just as God said, what reason do we have to doubt God for anything in the future? He has fulfilled everything He said, right to the line to this very moment. We have good reason to believe that He will fulfill the rest just exactly as He said.

Luke 21:22 tells us, "For these be the days of vengeance, [I tremble when I preach on this. What a terrible time it is when God takes vengeance.] that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Luke is writing in this verse about Daniel's prophesy. Everything that Daniel wrote was fulfilled: right then, not somewhere in the future.

Unbelief, my friend, works the same today after all these many years. What was "the day of the vengeance of God"? God promised, even from Moses' day and through the prophets, that if they raised up against Him and would not hear His voice, the day of His vengeance would come.

Brother, the day of God's vengeance came. He turned Titus and the Roman armies loose on the city of Jerusalem. The abomination which made that city desolate took place. It was more terrible than I can tell about. Then people try to tell me that eternal hell is just dying and that is all. Friend, what I am telling about is merely a taste of God's vengeance. Sinners are going to receive the full effect of it in the lake of fire. That will be the day of God's final vengeance.

I would like to share some Scriptures to help you better understand what took place when those Roman armies moved in. Luke 19:41-44 reads: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it (Why did He weep over it?), Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from throe eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that throe enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another"

What was Jesus' attitude when He walked into the city, and in His great wisdom, saw that it was just a short time until the abomination spoken of by Daniel was going to fall on them? He wept. After Gabriel came down and gave Daniel this message (that seventy weeks were determined on his people), he mourned and wept. Why did Daniel mourn and weep? Would he have mourned and wept if he could have seen that out in the end his people, the Jews, were going to be a world power and be used of God? On the contrary, Daniel knew God was through with his people and that terrible vengeance was coming on them. He was sick for three weeks, mourned, and wept. He had insight into something terrible, and it was terrible. Such great tribulation came upon those people that there never was one like it before and never will be one like it again.

When Love Turns to Wrath

Flavius Josephus, who was an unbeliever, inserted in his book (you can read page after page of the terrible things which happened when the abomination moved in), "It is God, therefore, it is God himself, who is bringing on this fire to purge that city and temple by means of the Romans. . . ."¹

You may play along lightly with God service after service; but remember, there is a day coming when God is going to take vengeance. You are going to reap what you sow. There are too many mocking God today, but a reaping time is coming. The lesson is right before us.

Somebody may ask, "Brother Wilson, are you sure of that?" History tells us that the slaughter was so great that, in some instances, the bodies were piled five feet deep, so they could not get through the streets of Jerusalem. The Romans, starting with the priests, hung the people on crosses; they kept crucifying them until there was no more room to put crosses in the ground. It sounds terrible, but it was guided by the hand of God. We need to behold the goodness and the severity of God. Certainly, God is love; but when love turns to wrath, you have never seen such wrath.

Josephus tells us that there were more people who perished within the city at the hands of their own people by rebels, suicide, anarchy, and the famine than from the hands of the Romans. Why? Jesus told them before He left that ". . . a house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matthew 12:25). That house became divided against itself until they killed each other by the hundreds of thousands. The Romans stood and watched them kill each other.

How can people get in such a state that they turn on each other? Let us turn to Matthew 12:43-45 to find the answer. Jesus, speaking to these very people said, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

¹Josephus' Complete Works, Thompson & Thompson, Chicago, Illinois. P. 671

When the Jews rejected the Gospel and rejected the One who could come in and take control of the house, they invited seven other spirits more wicked than the first. They were mad, devil-possessed men and women.

Do you know why this world is waxing worse and worse? Do you know why people are doing such terrible things today? Many of them have invited seven other spirits worse than the first. That is why I definitely do not agree with the theory that Jesus cleans you up, and then you may go for months before He moves in. No, Sir! That will not stand up to the Bible. Unless you allow the Master of the house to move right in through the Holy Spirit, the devil will come back with seven other spirits and take over.

No one has had to tarry for the Holy Ghost since Pentecost. The reason they tarried at Pentecost was because the Holy Ghost had not yet been poured out. John 7:37-39 tells us: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)." He was speaking of the Spirit which every believer should receive, but they could not receive Him then because Christ was not yet glorified. However, since Christ has been glorified, every believer receives the Holy Spirit in the initial work of salvation.

Fulfillment of God's Word

Why did they act like mad men and kill each other and their own companions? Jesus told them what would happen. People come service after service and take the preacher and the Holy Spirit lightly, but mark it down, there is a day of vengeance coming. Go back to the Old Testament prophecies. God, through the prophet, said, "Yea, they have chosen their own ways . . . I also will choose their delusions . . ." (Isaiah 66:3-4).

My friend, time and goodness would not allow me to tell you the terrible things that went on as historians set it forth. Yet, most everything they tell us is in the Bible. In Deuteronomy, God gave Israel a picture, hundreds of years before, of this very thing I am preaching about-the abomination of the desolation. "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God . . . that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee . . . The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten . . . and shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth" (Deuteronomy 28:15, 25). That is where the Jews are right now, and they never will be gathered together again.

These things came on Jerusalem because, ". . . thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve throe enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he' shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

"The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; [Here is a picture of the Romans. The eagle was their emblem.] a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand [they could not understand the Roman language]; A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young [Josephus said it did not make any difference whether the soldier met an elderly person or a woman carrying a baby; they would throw the baby up and catch it on their spears.]

"And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy lone, or flocks of thy sheep [Josephus tells us about all of this], until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee.

"And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, [Josephus stood and watched a woman cook her child and eat it. In Haiti I have seen people die from starvation; but I have never, in all my journeys there, seen any of them try to eat their own flesh. We need to take what God says to us a little more serious!] the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee" (Deuteronomy 28:47-53).

Written for Our Admonition

I want you to see why Matthew refers to it as a tribulation like never before or which ever will be again. I thank the Lord that the day of this great tribulation has passed. Let us read farther: ". . . thine enemies shall distress thee: So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave:

"So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh if his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith throe enemies shall distress thee" (verses 53-55). After the Romans had killed hundreds of thousands, they just surrounded the city, waited day by day, and watched hunger work on the people. The hunger, my friend, set them crazy until a man would kill his wife and eat her.

The big move of the devil in religion today is to pad the wrath of God. Many of the messages coming forth from the pulpit is how God loves you with an everlasting love. Certainly, He does; but my friend, what God says in His Word, He means. God's love is manifested in keeping His Word just exactly as He says.

As we go down through these verses of Scripture, keep in mind the words of the Apostle Paul, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). There is nothing too good for God to do, and there is nothing too bad for God to allow to have done, if He so decides.

Deuteronomy 28:56-57 continues: "The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them. . . ." I am talking about tribulation. When we get our God stirred, we have Someone on our hands.

The historians have verified these things in their writings. Josephus said that he stood and watched these things with his own eyes. This was the "Great Tribulation." It was the curse for disobedience and the day of God's vengeance.

We must realize some things which God is putting before us. Preachers are using this Scripture today, ". . . except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved . . ." (Matthew 24:22). That has nothing to do with us today. First of all, it is not our flesh which is being destroyed; we are getting our souls saved. That Scripture deals with the literal destruction of Jerusalem.

The Believers Are Saved

After Jerusalem had been destroyed and the temple torn down (not one stone upon another), the city was so full of dead, stinking people that the Roman armies started out through Judaea killing everybody, everywhere. Jesus had told the Christians to flee to the mountains of Judaea. Josephus said the Romans went up to the very edge of the mountains, and God stopped them. If He had not shortened the days of tribulation, there would not have been any flesh left. They would have even killed the Christians, but God protected them.

Josephus and other historians tell us that, to their knowledge, there was not one Christian hurt. Why? God gave them a sign. When they saw the sign, they were to flee. Every believer who fled was protected. If you will believe what God tells you, you will be protected by the hand of God too.

Before God pours one vial out on spiritual Babylon (fallen religion), He sounds the trumpet and gives every one of His people a chance to flee. He does not want them to suffer the vials of wrath which are coming on Babylon. As Christians, we will have tribulation serving God, but not the "Great Tribulation." I want you to see the difference. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33b). Thank God, He suffered it all; He overcame the world. Why did He come down, take on the likeness of sinful flesh and overcome it? For you and me. ". . . this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Sure, there is tribulation, but we can be of good cheer right while we are going through it. There is a vast difference between the tribulation of the world and the tribulation of Jerusalem.

Let us read Luke 21:33 for a few words of admonition from Jesus. He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." We have studied how God's Word was fulfilled. Here Jesus is letting us know that His Word will reach fulfillment.

He goes on to say in verse 34, "And take heed to yourselves . . ." When Jesus warned them about the "Great Tribulation." He told them to take heed about other men. Today, however, who is our biggest enemy? Ourselves! No one can keep us out of Heaven except ourselves. We can blame our backsliding on other people, but there is only one to blame-look in the mirror. God has planned salvation so that no man can stand before you. You can serve God if everybody is against you. Romans 8:31 tells us, ". . . If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Now, we have words of warning from the same Savior who warned the people of Jerusalem. He is talking to us in this generation. He said, "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, [Christians do not drink, but they can get drunk on things other than wine or alcohol. They can get drunk on Babylon's (fallen religion) wine or on the cares of this life.] and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them [that is all of us, friend] that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:34-35).

Just the same as Satan closed in on Jerusalem, he is closing in on the church. He is surrounding the camp of the saints and putting the pressure on us. He is not using guns and tanks; he is working on our minds. He is working through the cares of life to rob us of our spirituality.

Watch and Pray—Always

Luke 21:36 tells us, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape. . . ." It is the same thing He told the others. When we see things affecting us, we need to seek higher ground in our Christian experience.

I heard a story once about a duck flying toward Florida. When he saw a farmer out feeding the chickens and ducks, he circled around and said, "Boy, they have it made!" So he landed and stayed with them a few days. He just ate and enjoyed himself. Soon, another flock of ducks flew over. The weather was getting cold, and he said to the chickens, "I think I'm going to go South with them. I'll see you fellows later." He flopped and ran real fast, but he could not get off the ground.

Now, I see a lot of flopping and a lot of effort, but there are not many flying too high these days. They are weighted down with the cares of life. We all have cares of life. Yet, how are we going to escape the loss of our souls? "Pray always." The first picture of that "Great Tribulation" was the destruction of the flesh. Now, we must watch and escape the destruction of our spirit. The devil is against spirituality. He will let you go to church; he just does not want you to be spiritual.

Oh, how the world needs to know the truth about these things! May God help us to realize, Church of God, we are the dispensary of truth. May God help us to sound forth the truth and live the truth. I pray that you will take these last words as words of warning. All those people had to do in Jerusalem was to take Jesus' words lightly, and they were caught in the terrible destruction of the flesh. Now, all you and I have to do is take these words lightly (Luke 21:33-36), and we will be caught in the terrible destruction of our soul. On the other hand, by taking heed to God's warning, we can escape.

PART 3

Antichrist

Antichrists

We all can agree that there has been much supposition about antichrist, the man of sin, the mark of the beast, and the many different things which prophecy and the Revelation have set before us so explicitly. Since many believe that antichrist is the man of sin mentioned in the Scripture, many different men in the past have been named as the antichrist. Yet, all these have died and have been buried.

As we turn to 1 John, the second chapter, remember this: Too many are prone to feel that Revelation is the last book of the Bible. Yet chronologically, the last books written were First, Second, and Third John. John, in his writings, mentions the word antichrist four times. The word antichrists (plural) is mentioned one time. In fact, this is the only place it is found in the Bible.

Let us read 1 John 2:18, which states, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now [A.D. 961] are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." When John wrote this letter, he had just returned from the Island of Patmos. The apostasy had already had an effect on the church; the people were waiting for antichrist and did not know that there were many already there.

We have the same situation today. While the devil has the religious world charmed, waiting and looking for the antichrist, there are many antichrists right among Christendom, doing the antichrist work. What better way can the devil deceive people than to have them believing that antichrist has not yet come?

Who are these antichrists? When we look for antichrists, what kind of people do we look for? Many people do not recognize them because they have not been taught what the characteristics of an antichrist are. They are neither political leaders nor atheists. Antichrists are apostates—Christians who have fallen away from truth and are right among the people of God.

Verse 19 tells us, "They went out from us [not physically, but doctrinally]." They once knew the doctrine of the church, but apostatized from it. When John refers to antichrists, they were people who professed to be Christians but denied the Lord by following false teachings which were creeping in among the church.

The Original Faith

John's burden for the Christians was for them to hold to the original faith. Why? The devil believes and trembles; he believes the Word of God. The devil knows when we hold to the original faith of God's Word, that he is powerless against us. The devil knew in the garden of Eden that if Adam and Eve obeyed God, there was nothing he could do. His efforts are to cause men to transgress or move away from God's Word. It was true in the morning-time of the church, and it is true today.

John, therefore, was instructing the church to stay with the truth which was taught in the beginning. When I say, "in the beginning," I do not mean in the beginning of some reformers' day. We must look deeper into history for the original teachers: Jesus, Peter, Paul, James, John, etc.

John tells us in 1 John 1:1, 5: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled. . . . This then is the message which we have heard of him [this is the beginning]. . . ." If we will get back to the original message, it will still free us from confusion.

First John 2:7, 24 tells us: "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. . . . Let that there fore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye

have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." Everything which John preached was in complete harmony with what Jesus taught.

Second John 5-6 reads: "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it." John kept reminding the church of what they had been taught from the beginning because apostasy had set in. He began to parallel the error they were believing with what Jesus taught in the beginning.

What does this have to do with antichrist? John insisted that we must continue in the original faith and referred to those who departed from this faith as antichrists. They were members of the church who had become lukewarm in their experience and had changed their mind about truth. "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 . . ." (1 John 2:19). They were professing Christians who had adopted doctrines which were not part of the true faith which Jesus was the author of. Paul told the Hebrews to look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2).

Therefore, we need not look for antichrists outside the realms of professed Christianity. We have too many who feel they are still in the church because they are sitting in the assembly, but they have gone out from us doctrinally. This is one reason the church is not going forward any faster; we have people who have left us doctrinally but are still trying to take an active part in the service. The church can be just as militant as she ever was, if we will clean her up.

Denying the Father and the Son

Let us read 1 John 2:22-26: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from that beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that lie hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." The word *seduce* is used here to describe people who come to you in a very deceptive, sly way. If you are not careful, you will think they are good people.

Many a young lady has been seduced because she put too much confidence in the young man she was dating. Today, there are people being seduced spiritually because they are not listening to the Holy Spirit. They are not allowing the Lord to give them divine discernment. Instead, they are leaning on their own wisdom.

These apostates, whom John called antichrists, denied the Father and the Son because their doctrine was not the same as that which was taught from the beginning. This verse (22) produces confusion in some people's minds, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." Some people feel that antichrist has to be an atheist or an infidel because these deny the Father and the Son. Please reason with me. The pope (his office) is antichrist, but he claims to believe in both the Father and the Son. He talks about them and teaches people about them, to a certain degree. The pope is not an atheist or an infidel; nevertheless, he is an antichrist. This Scripture does not deal with those who deny the existence of the Father and the Son; it refers to those who deny Him in other ways. Essentially, they were people who claimed to be Christians but followed after apostate doctrines.

Let us read Jude 3 and 4: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares. . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Jude said, "For there are certain men crept in unawares. . . ." If antichrist was an atheist or an infidel, would he creep in unawares? An atheist makes it known that he does not believe in God. The reason they

creep in unawares is because they profess Christianity; they profess to be Church of God. Yet all of the time, they are being used of the enemy.

Jude said, ". . . it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." God does not deliver this faith to the priest, pope, potentate, or such like; He delivers it unto the saints. Every move of antichrist religion is to take the Word from the saints. We must contend for this faith which was once delivered unto the saints because these antichrists will try to lead us astray.

Reverence and Fear Are Essential

Jude then describes these men as "ungodly men." Please notice the next word—"turning." Why do men want to turn or change the truth of the living God? Romans 1:25 tells us they went so far that they changed the truth of God into a lie. Why? Because they were ungodly men, men who had lost the fear of God from their soul. When they lost the fear of God, they began twisting and turning the Scripture. This is the first mark of an antichrist: They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

Reverence and fear for God is the first essential for faith and revelation of God's Word. Whenever you lose the holy awe and reverence for God, you will soon lose your revelation of God's eternal Word. One thing which God demands is that you hold Him in reverential fear and awe. We must respect Him as Almighty God at all times.

The teaching of eternal security is antichrist. The grace of God was given to bring you salvation, deliver you from sin, and grant you power to live free from sin. Yet, eternal security teachers try to make the grace of God a license whereby you can live in sin and still go to Heaven—that is antichrist. Maybe everyone who teaches eternal security today is not an ungodly individual, but it had its beginning in ungodly men.

Many people who do not know the truth are following that perditious way. God hates this damnable, eternal security doctrine more than any doctrine which is being fabricated today. They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and by doing so, they deny the Lord Jesus Christ. The word lasciviousness means "lustfulness, wantonness, ludeness, or loose living." These people join the church and are baptized; yet, they are not too careful about their living.

God's children must be careful or the spirit of this doctrine will try to creep in. I have never seen such a time when people who profess Christianity live so carelessly. The devil charms them with the idea that even though there are some things in their life which should be straightened out, God will have mercy on them because they go to church.

People must be awakened to the fact that the Last Judgment is real and that the lake of fire is everlasting. Heaven or hell is right out ahead, and we are only one heartbeat from that eternity.

Paul said in Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." On the contrary, eternal security teachers tell people that they cannot live above sin. How do they deny God and the Lord Jesus Christ? By denying God's Word. John said, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). People may be saved from sin, but if they play around with sin, it will destroy their soul.

Human Reasoning Versus Truth

The second reason these men were "ungodly" was because of human reasoning and human appearance. When you begin to look at sin in the human, it appears less hideous when committed under the cloak of religion. Preachers who teach eternal security will expose a sinner and tell him that he is going to hell. Then they turn right around and tell people to put on a cloak of religion, and God will overlook their sin. They are changing the very message of the grace of God. I read a bumper sticker the other day which expresses my thoughts very well. It read: If I can sin and go to Heaven, what do I have to do to go to hell?

One reason we cannot get a good, old-fashioned revival stirred up in the community is because so many people have been taught eternal security. The Apostle Paul had only one thing to say about eternal security. He said, "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:2).

The reason these "ungodly men" turn the grace of God into lasciviousness is because the authority of our only Master and Lord is against the license which they afford the flesh. We have never seen such a time when false religion makes so much room for the flesh. Jesus only has one message for us concerning the flesh—crucify it! We are not to pet, pamper, or polish it. How many times do we have to crucify it? Every day (maybe several times a day, if necessary). When you take Christ out of the Gospel (I mean the real, living Christ), any use can be made of the Gospel; but if you give Christ His rightful place in the sphere of divine truth, the force is definitely AGAINST sin.

Let us read a little more of that which was from the beginning. First John 3:1-4 tells us: "Behold, what manner of love the Father bath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law. . . ."

Verse 4 lets us know that there cannot be sin without a transgression of the Law. Yet, there might be a transgression of the Law without it being sin. You may have been ignorant of the Law, and if you were ignorant, it was not sin.

First John 2:27 tells us, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." What lets us know whether we have sinned or not? We know by what the Holy Spirit has revealed to us in this New Testament day. In Old Testament days, the Law was written on the walls and doorposts, and they might not have read it. They could have transgressed and ignorantly sinned, which could be atoned by an offering. In this New Testament day, the Holy Spirit writes the Law on our hearts and minds. When He writes it there, we cannot be ignorant of what we are doing. If the Holy Spirit has not written it on our heart, we are not accountable.

In Romans 7:5 Paul dealt with the motions of sin. He said, "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." Temptations will come to your mind, but there must be some motions (decisions) made down in your heart ("I know it's wrong, but I am going to do it.") before it ever brings forth spiritual death.

First John 3:4 tells us, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." Now, suppose you have been doing something which you did not realize was wrong. After a message is preached, you are enlightened to your wrong doing. What is your reaction? If you are honest, you will walk in the light; that is spiritual growth. When light comes, you just walk in the light by not continuing in that wrong doing.

God's Seed

Let us read 1 John 3:5-9: "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he [Christ] is righteous. He that committeth [John used the word commit; you cannot commit sin without action on your part] sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

John is not saying that it is impossible to sin, but he is giving you a good reason for not sinning: God's seed. First Peter 1:23 tells of this seed, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." Where is that seed? If you are His child, it is the center of your affections, down in the center of your heart. As long as you love God's Word and His seed remains in your heart, you cannot sin.

When David committed adultery, he wasn't thinking on the twenty-third Psalm; he was thinking on something else. The Bible tells us to "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The first appearance of evil is always a thought, an evil thought. If you will shun it right then, as the Bible instructs, you will not sin. The grace of God gives you power to shun the evil when it appears.

The devil hates holiness; he only wants one spot on your garment, regardless of how he accomplishes his end. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning . . ." (1 John 3:10-11).

These false teachers, according to Jude, were so deceptive that they crept in unawares with their counterfeit doctrine. Second Peter 2:1-2 tells us: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways [it is always a mystery to me how many people, who you really had confidence in, will follow apostasy]. . . ." Peter said they come in privily, in secret, or in a hidden way. They have damnable heresies, through which they deny God and the Lord Jesus Christ. I repeat: They deny the Lord by turning from the Gospel which He has taught and by teaching these heretical doctrines. There are countless millions in Christendom following these pernicious ways which ungodly men laid out in the very beginning.

Let us study the word antichrist; it actually means "one who denies or opposes Christ." These people who John talked about (apostates) were not only openly against Christ but professed to be Christians. Apostates claim to be as Christ; they take the position in their life which actually belongs to Christ. The same spirit works today. An anointed ministry can show people definitely what the will of God is; yet they say, "I am going to do it my way."

The Beast and His Image

Most people understand the Revelation message of how the beast (Roman Catholicism) rose out of the sea which the mountain on fire went into. This is a picture of Mount Zion (the church) on fire, falling away into the hands of the people (the sea). Out of the sea arose this beast, Roman Catholicism.

Roman Catholicism began with the popes heading a system which teaches false doctrine. They teach things in exact opposition to that which Christ taught from the beginning. I cannot explain it all in this message, but for example, just take the matter of prayer. Jesus said in Matthew 6:7, "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." In contradiction, Roman Catholics are taught to say the same few words over and over and over and over. This is exactly what Jesus said not to do, so it is antichrist.

Jesus said, "Love your enemies . . . pray for them which despitefully use you . . ." (Matthew 5:44). Nevertheless, they murdered sixty million Christians. Hebrews 13:4 tells us that, "Marriage is honourable . . ."; yet, they forbid some to marry. One of the Ten Commandments is "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . ." (Exodus 20:4). On the contrary, every place of worship in Catholicism is full of idols and images; that is antichrist. Roman Catholics are not governed by the Bible; they are governed by what the church teaches.

As we move our thoughts into the realms of Protestantism, we see an image (Protestantism) built to the beast (Roman Catholicism). It is the same situation: You can read to a protestant what the Word of God says, and they will rise up and say, "Our church does not teach that." Protestants are not guided by the words of Jesus; they are guided by whatever their church teaches.

This spirit even tries to attach itself to the people attending the Church of God. A minister may spend hours praying and studying to be able to deliver the Word of God in an understandable way. Even so, some people say, "I'll do what I want to; I don't care what he says." That is antichrist!

Therefore, where are these antichrists? Are we going to see them appear in Rome, Spain, Germany, or Washington? No. They are working in Christendom, just exactly where they have always been working. Anywhere there is a group of Christians, the devil is working for a place to creep in.

Reckless Speech Occasions Great Disorder

In what other ways can we deny him? For the answer, let us read Titus 1:10-16: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

Paul lets us know that reckless speech occasions great disorder. A pastor knows this better than anyone else. Churches and families have been led to quarrels and divisions because of reckless, unruly talk. We must be careful by what influence we speak. Some people will say anything for gain. This "filthy lucre" does not always mean money; it means gain. Some people talk the way they do for prestige, popularity, & friendship. God is looking, not only on what we say, but why we say it.

Second Timothy 3:1-5 tells us: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." We are facing this very condition today. Every trait of old heathenism is being carried out among people who profess to be Christians. It is the same spirit of antichrist. If we are the Church of God, we will live as the Bible teaches.

A Service of Love

We are in a time, my friend, of loose faith, loose practice, and easy law. Few people hear anything about real, practical religion. The move in religion is to do as little as necessary, yet get to Heaven. That very motive will send people to hell because there is no love in that attitude. One demand in the service of Christ is that it is a service of love; you must keep His commandments because you love Him.

According to the Apostle Paul, this is a time when true godliness is being falsified (having a form of godliness). Vice is blacker in the eyes of God when it is practiced under the cloak of religion than when it is practiced out in the dark world. Men in religion today attempt to drag God down to the levels of sin.

These Scriptures also lead us to believe that it is a period of time in which there will be little hope of ever reclaiming apostates. Second Timothy 3:7 reads, "Ever learning, and never [never] able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Apostasy does not pay. Denying God and the Lord Jesus Christ, by refusing to walk in the light of His Word, can put you in a place where you will never come to the actual knowledge of the truth.