

Who is Antichrist?

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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 the Lord is present. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come the 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 worshiped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what restraineth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now hindereth will continue to hinder until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

Across the pages of Scripture passes a character who is awesome and appalling. This menacing figure is mysterious; he is hazy and enigmatic. Sometimes he's a shady character. Again, he is an evil influence. Then again, he is an angel of light. There is actually no crystal-clear, cameo-cut presentation of him. He moves on the borderline of the natural and the supernatural.

Who is this man who is called "that man of sin" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3? Some expositors from the very beginning have seen him as only an evil influence in the world. We will look at that passage where the apostle John speaks of him as "that spirit of antichrist." Of course, this does not preclude him from being a person, which I believe he is, and I think most accept that today. John does identify him as a person, and John alone calls him by the name Antichrist. This does not mean, of course, that only John refers to him; Antichrist has many names in Scripture. Just as most crooks have aliases, Antichrist has more aliases than any person I know of. He has thirty names which are given on the pages of Scripture. Also, many figures of speech are used in God's Word to speak of him, to set him before us, and they occur again and again. Also, there are many types of him in Scripture, and I'll be referring to that later in this message.

Now let's nail down some facts concerning this very elusive character to see if he is a person or an influence, or both. We can begin by saying that the FBI hasn't been able to get his fingerprints, and they have gathered no facts concerning him. They do not have a dossier on him, yet Scripture pinpoints some means of identification as well as the time he appears. I think that the time he appears is the all-important question. And this will be the principal subject of this message.

Let's look at the name Antichrist for just a moment. Notice first the preposition "anti" that appears before the name of Christ and which forms his name. "Anti" has two meanings. It can mean "against." It also can mean "instead of." It can be a substitute, and it can be a very good substitute or subterfuge for something. It means "in place of" or "in imitation of."

This, then, raises the question: Is he a false Christ, or is he an enemy of Christ? Where is

the emphasis placed?

Enemy or Imitator?

Let's turn first to the epistles of John and see what John has to say about him. I'm going to consider every reference that he has given concerning him. The first is in 1 John 2:18. He begins by saying, "Little children, it is the last time," yet it has been nineteen hundred years since John wrote that. We've been living in the last days for a long time.

Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, by which we know that it is the last time. (1 John 2:18)

Notice that John not only says there is *going* to be an Antichrist, but already in his day there were many antichrists.

Now what was the thing that identified an antichrist? It was one who denied the deity of Jesus Christ. That is the primary definition of Antichrist, as we are told in the following verse:

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22)

So you see, Antichrist is against Christ, and he denies the deity of Christ. We see now he is an enemy of Christ.

John will continue this in the fourth chapter:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. By this know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, of which ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:1-3)

What is the spirit of antichrist? It is that which denies the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, and I say this dogmatically, the rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar* is antichrist. It denies the deity of Christ. I don't want to be ugly, but I must add that every liberal preacher who denies the deity of Christ is an antichrist – but not the Antichrist. You are antichrist when you deny the deity of Christ. You are an enemy of Jesus Christ. That's very important, I think, to see.

The Lord Jesus Himself, you remember, said that many would come in His name and they would deceive many. They would be pseudo-christs; they would pretend to be Christ. And John says: "...And this is that spirit of antichrist, of which ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world."

John nails it down. That is antichrist.

Now in his second epistle John gives the other side:

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (2 John 7)

He is a deceiver. He pretends to be Christ. On one side he is an enemy of Christ. On another side, he is a deceiver.

How can we reconcile these two aspects of the person of Antichrist? How can Antichrist, when he appears be an enemy of Christ, at the same time pretend to be Christ? Well, this has troubled me for a long time, and I have given a lot of thought to it. Probably anybody else would have discovered it in a minute, but it took me a long time to discover it.

Now I want to turn your attention to the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Revelation. And if you will forgive me, I am going to quote my own translation – which I do not recommend, as I call it the McGeeicus Ad Absurdum translation! All I’ve attempted to do is to lift out of the original Greek the meaning of the words. It is a little different and I hope a little clearer. Here are the first four verses:

And he stood on the sand of the sea; and I saw a [wild] beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the [wild] beast which I saw was like unto a panther, 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 throne, and great authority. And one of his heads as though it had been slain unto death; and his stroke of death was healed; and the whole [inhabited] earth wondered after the beast. And they worshiped the dragon [this is Satan worship, by the way], because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, who is like unto the beast? And who is able to war with him?

Now I want to drop down to verses 11-14:

And I saw another [wild] beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he was speaking as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first [wild] beast in his presence. And he maketh the earth and the dwellers therein to worship the first [wild] beast, whose wound of death was healed. And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven into the earth in the sight of men. And he deceiveth the dwellers on the earth through the signs which it was given him to do in the presence of the [wild] beast; saying to the dwellers on the earth that they should make an image to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived.

In this passage that I’ve quoted from Revelation 13, there are two beasts represented. The first beast is Antichrist, the enemy of Christ. The second beast, the false prophet, is like a lamb – but he’s not a lamb. He’s a wild beast underneath. Now this is the one who pretends to be Christ. And you will recall the Lord Jesus in the Olivet Discourse repeatedly warned about one coming in His name. He said, “Many will come in my name and say, ‘I’m Christ.’ Don’t be deceived by that.” Now we today have so lowered our conception of the Person of Christ, that I think we would accept any man who could bring peace to this world. I do not think the world

would ask whether he came from heaven or hell, and I don't think they would care. They would take him. They would elect any man who could bring peace to this world today, and that man will be Antichrist. He will be a false Christ who will bring in a period of peace.

Here in Revelation 13 is presented the first aspect of Antichrist. Let me go over this again rather carefully.

1. We are told that "he stood on the sand of the sea." "He" refers back to the dragon in the preceding chapter. There the dragon is identified as Satan. Satan is the one who brings this beast up out of the sea.
2. "The sea" is representative of the Gentile nations. So out of the nations of the world he is coming.
3. The beast rising "out of the sea" pictures the first ruler. He will not be a Jew.
4. The second beast, "and another wild beast" (verse 11), has to be a Jew in order to be accepted by the Jews.

So you see, two men are presented on the pages of Scripture, and both men represent Antichrist. There are many antichrists. These two will head up all that the Word of God has to say concerning the Antichrist who is to come. This again is my own translation:

And he stood on the sand of the sea; and I saw a [wild] beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. (Revelation 13:1)

Then in the following verses he goes on to describe him.

Is Antichrist Rome reunited? Some expositors look at this "beast" as the nation of Rome which is to be brought back together. Others regard him as the Antichrist who puts it together. May I say to you that I think it refers to both. You cannot have a king without a kingdom; you cannot have a kingdom without a king. If you don't believe that, ask Constantine II, exiled king of Greece, who escaped to Italy. He is no king – he doesn't have a kingdom. He is out of a job and has had a hard time. A true king must have a kingdom. When you have a kingdom, you have to have a king. This "beast" refers to both the kingdom and the person.

Is he someone from the past? Now verse 3 says something that has disturbed a great many of us – it has disturbed me, I can assure you. Again my literal translation:

And one of his heads as though it had been slain unto death; and his stroke of death was healed; and the whole [inhabited] earth wondered after the beast.
(Revelation 13:3)

There is a belief abroad that this will be some man who has lived in the past whom Satan will bring back from the dead. Some believe he will be Nero. The early church believed he would be Nero. Also a great many of the church fathers believed that he would be Judas Iscariot. And right now in prophetic circles in this country a belief is circulating that Antichrist will indeed be Judas Iscariot. Now I dismiss all this speculation absolutely, and I'll tell you why I have to dismiss it. It is because of the fact that the head of the "beast" described here was wounded and he is brought back to life. Can Satan resurrect anyone from the dead? The answer is absolutely he

cannot.

I believe this refers to the kingdom of the “beast”; this is the Roman Empire that fell apart and will come back together again. And it’s like a resurrection. The “beast” himself will not be raised from the dead. I do think some kind of chicanery will be used concerning him, but I do not think that he will die and be raised from the dead. Satan cannot raise the dead.

Now I want to turn to a passage of Scripture that I feel is very important in this connection. Note now the words of the Lord Jesus. He is giving the reason that He can say, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.” Why? Actually there are three reasons He can say that, one of which is that He raises the dead, and He is the only one to whom the Father has given that power.

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and giveth them life, even so the Son giveth life to whom he will. (John 5:21)

Only God can give life. And now the Lord Jesus, who is God, says He gives life also. Now let me drop down in this passage to verse 25:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, 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. (John 5:25)

Whose voice? The voice of the Son of God. Only Jesus Christ can raise the dead. Satan cannot do that. Therefore, Antichrist could not be Nero. He could not be Judas Iscariot. He could not be anybody who has already lived. He will have to be some new person that appears on the scene. He goes on to say regarding Christ:

...All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:28, 29)

What does He mean by “they that have done good”? They came to Him with the question:

...What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. (John 6:28, 29)

Today the good work God asks you to do is to believe on Jesus Christ. It is the believer who will hear His voice and be raised. Then later on, as I understand it, the Old Testament saints are to be raised to enter the Kingdom, during the Millennium, at the end of the Great Tribulation. Then at the end of the Millennium, the lost are raised for judgment. Only Jesus Christ can raise the dead.

Have you ever noticed that no so-called faith healer can raise the dead? God gave that sign to the apostles; not only could Simon Peter and Paul and the others heal the sick, they also raised the dead. And when you find one of these “faith healers” abroad today who is raising the dead, let me know. I’ll go see him then, but not until then. Power to heal the sick and raise the

dead was given to the apostles. It's been given to no one else! Only the Son has power to raise the dead. My, this is a tremendous fact today! Therefore, I don't see how in the world the Antichrist could be Judas or anyone else who has already died.

How can he imitate Christ? Now let's look at this other aspect of Antichrist. He's a false christ, a pseudo-christ. In 2 Thessalonians there are several things I would like to refer to. First of all, will you notice that he's called here the "wicked one." That's another one of his aliases.

And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. (2 Thessalonians 2:8, 9)

So Antichrist will perform miracles. He will be a miracle worker. And do you know that he's the only miracle worker the Scriptures promise for the future, with the exception of the Lord Jesus Christ? He's the only one. For this reason I'm not interested in "miracle workers" today. I am afraid of them.

A family who had belonged to a church I went to pastor in Nashville had gone into spiritualism. The pastor who had retired suggested I go to visit them. I went to see them, and they said, "Why, Dr. McGee, we sat for fifteen years in that Presbyterian church, and we never saw anything happen. We went into spiritualism and, just like that, things began to happen." And I said, "I believe you. But why would anybody with intelligence sit fifteen years with nothing happening? I think I would have moved before then." I feel sorry for people who have been sitting in churches for fifteen years without anything happening. My friend, something ought to happen if you've been sitting in God's house listening to God's Word! The second thing I said to them was: "The terrible truth is that you have come into something that *does* have power, but have you ever questioned the source of that power? John says to try the spirits. See whether they are of God or not. Had it ever occurred to you that this may be Satan?" Oh, they had never thought of that. "Well," I said, "it might be well to try it out. We have no miracle worker today except one that will come finally from Satan." And I said, "We walk today by *faith*." God's people find that so hard, don't we? We want to *see* something. We want to *hear* something. We want to *experience* something. And I believe in all of that, but I think the important thing in this world in which we are living is to be able to walk with God by faith.

Now this one we call Antichrist who is to appear denies the Deity – but he assumes deity.

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them who dwell on it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of man, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by 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, that had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he hath power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all,

both small and great, rich and poor, free and enslaved, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads, and that no man might buy or sell, except he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred three-score and six. (Revelation 13:11-18)

He acts like he's a lamb, but he's a wild beast. He's Antichrist. He pretends to be Christ, and he will be the religious ruler of the world. And he will work with Antichrist, the political ruler of the world.

Part of the mystery in trying to identify Antichrist has been the belief that he is one person and that we must have one person to fulfill the demands of Scripture. However, the first "beast" represents the first aspect of Antichrist that denies the deity of Christ and is the enemy of Christ. The second "beast" represents the second aspect of Antichrist. He is a wolf in sheep's clothing in that he imitates Christ. And both together are *the* Antichrist. Both are against the living and true Christ. And that's the reason the Lord Jesus Himself said twice in the Olivet Discourse, "Many will come in my name. They will deceive many." And that is the tragic thing.

Two Departures?

I want you to notice in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 something very, very important. "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except..." Notice the reference to "that day." What day is that? It is the Day of the Lord; it is the day that the apostles asked Jesus about. You remember that they came to the Lord Jesus when He went to the top of the Mount of Olives and asked Him first, "When shall these things be?" (Matthew 24:3). When will there not be left here one stone upon another? (See verse 2.) He told them that when they would see Jerusalem compassed with armies they would know the time had come. That happened in A.D. 70. I'm of the opinion that several of the apostles were there. Perhaps they climbed up on the battlements of the walls of Jerusalem and looked over. When they saw the standard, the eagles of the Roman government of Titus there, I think one apostle nudged the other and said, "This is what He was talking about. This is it! It has come to pass." Titus destroyed Jerusalem just as the Lord Jesus said, and not one stone was left upon another. Let me repeat what I said in another message – it bears repeating. If you doubt that one stone was not left upon another, look at the wailing wall in Jerusalem today. The thing that amazes me about the western wall is the kinds of stones that are in it. There are stones from Solomon's temple, from the temple days of Ezra and Haggai and from every other period. One stone was not left upon another when Titus took Jerusalem. And that prophecy was fulfilled.

They had another question: What is the sign of the end of the age? Now that is what Paul is talking about in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The Lord Jesus labeled the end of the age as the Great Tribulation period. I didn't label it. No evangelical labeled it. The Lord Jesus is the One who labeled it the Great Tribulation period (Matthew 24:21). He said there would be nothing like it in the history of the world.

Now let's look at this again:

Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except

there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

The word I'm interested in here is "the *falling away* first." And when I made a study of this word, I just had to stand up in my study and say, "Hallelujah!" What a wonderful revelation it was to see the root meaning of the word. Now the word in Greek is *apostasia* and it comes from *apostasis*. The root word means "departure" or "removal from." And the verb means "to remove, to depart, to leave." It comes from two words: *histemi*, meaning "to stand," and *apo*, meaning "away from." From this we get our word apostasy. Apostates, we understand today, are men who held the truth at one time. They've stood for the truth of Scripture and now they *apohistemi*, they stand away from it.

That's one meaning of the word. But that's not all the meaning of this word. The primary meaning is "a departure." Paul says that day shall not come until the "falling away" or "departure." What departure is he talking about? Well, the same departure he talked about in his first epistle to the Thessalonians. That's the Rapture of the church. The church is going to depart from this earth. The Rapture is the removal of the church, the departure of the church from the earth. Paul dwelt on that in his first epistle when he was answering their question about their loved ones:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up.... (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17)

This is an *apohistemi*, that's a departure. And to me the word that Paul uses is marvelous because it speaks of two things. It speaks of two departures, because the whole church is to apostatize:

1. The true church is to leave the earth;
2. The professing church will just move away from the truth.

The Lord Jesus said, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find [the] faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). That is, will He find that the body of truth, the apostles' doctrine, is still held? In the original Greek the question is phrased in such a way that it demands a negative answer. The professing church will have departed so far from the faith that in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation it is called the harlot. The true church, called the Bride of Christ, has been caught up to meet Him. That departure must come first. As we saw in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "... that day shall not come, except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." In other words, the Antichrist cannot appear until the true church departs from this earth. Now we have this twofold meaning. Some shall depart from the faith, and some shall depart from the earth. The departure of the true church from the earth brings in total apostasy; so that what the Lord Jesus said about not finding faith on the earth when He comes will be fulfilled.

Now from the viewpoint of the earth, it will be a departure. From the viewpoint of heaven, it will be a rapture; they will be caught up – *apostasia*. That will be the leaving, the departure,

of the true church. I think that the world is going to say at that time, “They’re gone. They’ve departed. They’ve left us.” And if they are ever to say, “Hallelujah,” that’s when they’ll say it. The world will rejoice at first. Antichrist will make them believe that they’re entering the Millennium when actually they will be entering the Tribulation. That, I think, is the big lie. The world will think they’re bringing in the Millennium. And, my friend, haven’t you voted already for many candidates who promised to bring peace to this world? Didn’t Woodrow Wilson promise it as far back as 1917? And hasn’t peace been the platform of many men since then? Don’t misunderstand – these men are sincere. They’re not antichrists. But they tried to bring peace to the earth. You and I both know that when the man appears on the scene who tells this war-weary world, “We’re going to have peace, and I’m going to bring it,” they will say, “Bring him on. We turn it all over to him.” And the world would take him today in five minutes if he appeared. Only God is holding him back. God is not going to let him appear until He calls out His church, and He alone knows when that time will be fulfilled.

The world will be rejoicing as the Antichrist begins his rule. But it’s going to be the saddest day this earth has ever seen, because it means the departure of the church and the entrance of the world into an awful period identified by Christ as the Great Tribulation.

I saw this illustrated some time ago. We were out at the airport getting ready to take a plane to go back East. We had quite a bit of time to spend because we always get there early. So I spent some time walking around. There was a plane getting ready to leave for the Hawaiian Islands, and I am always interested in going to the Hawaiian Islands, so I just looked at the folk who were going. Most of them were going out for a holiday. But I saw a couple sitting there, a soldier boy in uniform, a fine looking young fellow, and beside him the prettiest little wife you’ve ever seen, holding a fine looking baby. And they were both sad. Everybody else going to the Hawaiian Islands was anticipating the fun they were going to have, but he was on his way to Hawaii to join his outfit going to Vietnam. There sat that fellow and there sat the girl. They weren’t saying anything. They were just staring out into space. The little boy didn’t know what it was all about, so he was having a big time. When the call came to board the plane, they stood up. I saw him put those great big arms around both of them, his wife and that little boy. And he kissed both of them. Tears were coming down his cheeks and tears were coming down her cheeks. The little boy, he was still having a big time. And then the fellow picked up his little old bag he had there, started out to the plane, and disappeared. The girl stood there, then she went over to the window and waited till the plane pulled out to get on the runway. I watched her as she went away carrying that baby and carrying that bag you women have to carry when you’ve got a baby. She was weighted down. I never felt as sorry for anyone as I did for that girl. I wondered what the future held. Was there a father or a mother she would go to, or would she have to live alone and take care of that baby by herself? I don’t know, but it was sad to see.

I thought, *That’s the way it’s going to be on this earth someday when the departure, the Rapture, takes place.* The earth will rejoice for awhile, but then a great company of people are going to begin to wake up. They will find they’ve been deceived. The man who promised peace is Antichrist, not Christ at all. He has taken them in; he has absolutely deceived them.

Just Like Ahithophel

There are many types of the Antichrist in history and on the pages of Scripture. I think Judas is probably the most accurate type. But for another illustration I would like you to look at

one that may have escaped your notice. He is Ahithophel. Maybe you haven't even heard of Ahithophel. You can read his story in 2 Samuel 15-17. Ahithophel was one of the counselors in the inner circle that counseled David. David looked to him as he looked to no other man for advice. Then word came to David that Absalom, his favored son, was stirring up a rebellion. It broke David's heart that his own son was leading a rebellion against him. David was warned by those who loved him that the thing was underhanded, that those whom he thought were true to him were not true to him. They had deceived him. So David left the city of Jerusalem and went up the ascent of Mount Olivet. Then word came to him that Ahithophel had gone over to Absalom. This was a low blow to David. It was bad enough to have his own son rebel against him, but now Ahithophel, his chief counselor, the man whom he knew and trusted, had betrayed him. Weeping and with his head covered, David went out over the Mount of Olives, back down into the wilderness again. David had been deceived. Ahithophel, I think, is a picture of Antichrist who will deceive this world someday.

Now I want to turn to Psalm 55, a psalm that David wrote with this rebellion as the background. There's a storm brewing:

I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

There was an undercurrent, and David now is getting away from it.

Destroy, O Lord, and confuse their tongues [the tongues of these who were plotting the death of David]; ***for I have seen violence and strife in the city.***

We think today that violence and strife in the city are something new. David saw it in Jerusalem. Perhaps there were those carrying placards conducting little protest meetings in front of the palace saying, "Down with David. Up with Absalom." And David says, "There's strife and violence in the city."

Day and night they go about it upon the walls; mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

David said, "When I walk down the street, Mr. So-and-so speaks to me, and I'm not sure whether he's my friend or not now. I've heard he's been plotting against me." David says, "I'm getting out of Jerusalem." Now listen to him:

For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hidden myself from him.

He's talking about Ahithophel.

But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and my familiar friend.

"Why, Ahithophel – he's my friend, and now he has betrayed me." He's a Judas Iscariot.

We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

David just bursts out with this cry of judgment:

Let death seize upon them, and let them go down alive into sheol; for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

Now, David, what are you going to do in a time like this? Listen to David.

As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me.

David, what are you going to do when all of the foundations are going out from under you? He says, "I'm going to trust the Lord. I'm going to rest in Him." Friend, we're living in dangerous days. Whom do you trust today – really? Whom do you rest upon? Now listen to David – he's not through.

The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

He says, "Old Ahithophel, that sly, slippery snake that he was, just wriggled his way right into the palace; he put his arm around me and said, 'You know, David, I love you. I'm going to serve you.'" And David says his words were like melted butter, smooth as oil, but in his heart was war. What will you do, David?

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. (verses 8-16, 21, 22)

David says, "The thing I'm going to do is trust in God. I can't even trust Ahithophel. I can't trust in men, but I can trust God."

As we move into the end time we're seeing the thing that Paul said would take place during the last days of the church. Men would be traitors and high-minded, and you would not be able to trust them. These are days when God's people need to trust the Lord as they've never trusted Him before.

To Know Him!

Now I want to make a practical application. Very frankly this character, the Antichrist, who passes across the pages of Scripture, I see as two persons: one against Christ; another attempting to be Christ. But both of them are awful deceivers and terrible enemies of Christ. I don't ever expect to see either one of them. I don't want to know them. But I want to say this to you: I want to know the Lord Jesus Christ a little better. Even Paul, when he got to the end of his life, said:

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of

his sufferings.... (Philippians 3:10)

I want to know Christ, not Antichrist. I want to know not just about Him, I want to know *Him*. I want the Holy Spirit to take the things of Christ and make them real to me. This is the Book where He does it, the Word of God. That's the reason I'm interested in getting His Word out, because through this Book you're going to know Him.

Let me conclude with an illustration that comes from my Southland before the Civil War.

There were many boats in those days that plied up and down the Mississippi River. It was a great artery of commerce. Also many passenger boats went up and down the river. When two boats met it was the custom for everyone to run on deck and wave at the folk on the other boat. Now that may not seem very exciting to you, but for them it relieved the monotony of the trip. On one occasion when two boats were passing, a black fireman came up on board. He stood at the rail next to a very elegantly dressed gentleman. When the approaching boat came abreast of them, he nudged this elderly gentleman with his elbow and said excitedly, "Look, look, yonder's the captain! See the captain! Do you see the captain?" His insistence was a little irritating to this gentleman. He drew himself up to his full height and said, "Of course I see the captain. Every boat has a captain. There is nothing unusual about a captain." The man looked at him almost in disgust, and he said, "You see that captain over there? He's different. I used to work on his boat and I fell overboard one day. I can't swim. That captain saw that I was going down. He took off his coat, he took off his cap, and he jumped into the river. When I was going down for the third time he rescued me. That captain saved my life. And ever since then I just love to point him out!"

Well, friend, the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who has saved us from sin, and He is the One we love to point out. Actually, the important question to be able to answer is not "Who is Antichrist?" The vital question for you and me to answer is the Lord Jesus Christ's question: "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" (Matthew 16:13). Can we say that He is the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, the One who has saved our souls from sin? When we can say that, we have answered the most important question of life.