

IS CHRIST COMING AGAIN?

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE USURPER'S SHORT REIGN

The period of the Antichrist's supremacy is to be short. The march of modern movements in both the secular and religious world, indicate his soon coming.

- We read this in the decline of faith as expressed by the word "*modernism*," which stands for the repudiation of all supernatural and sacred authority;
- We read it in the progress of the "*devil's lie*," that men by natural wisdom can know all there is to be known of God.
- We read it in that "*mental assassination*" that is voiced by "Theosophy," "New Thought," "Christian Science," and allied deceptions;
- We read it in that increasing strife that takes the form of growing "Socialism" in one land, "Communism" in another, and "Anarchy" in a third.
- We read it in that *inordinate greed* that characterizes corporate wealth, and in increased navies and armies, on the part of mighty nations;
- We read it in the widespread *apostasy* in Protest-"*ism*",
- We read it in the cunning consummation of papal powers and plans.

We hold that the rise of the Antichrist will be the signal of the "*parousia*" or the sudden appearance of Christ in the heavens to catch up His people for the brief period of the blessed Rapture in which the Antichrist, the Beast and the False Prophet, shall have their bloody day on earth, to be ended by the "*Epiphany*," or the revelation of the King, coming in power, attended by His saints, to uncrown and conquer His enemy and take the throne.

The Revelation, 13th and 14th chapters, present the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and some features of the final conflict.

THE FIRST BEAST— THE ANTICHRIST

"And I . . . saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy," etc. (Revelation 13:1-10).

To four facts we call attention.

THE RISE OF THIS BEAST IS POLITICAL

“And I . . . saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns.”

To “**arise out of the earth**” (Daniel) is an expression employed in Scripture to express exaltation from among the people; and if one will follow the Word through, he will see that to “**rise up out of the sea**,” is to come forth from the midst of agitated peoples.

In Isaiah 57:20 we read, “**The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.**” In Daniel’s (7:3) vision, “**four great beasts come from the sea**”; and you will remember that when he afterward interprets, he tells us that this was out of the turbulent nations of his time; and in Revelation 17:15, “**The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.**”

This Beast then will come to his ascendancy in a time when the states of the earth are turbulent; just such a condition as Christ himself describes as set to characterize the last days (See Matthew 24:6-21).

If there were needed further proof that his rise is political, that exists abundantly in the figure of “**having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns.**” Daniel has forever settled the question of the meaning of horns, heads and diadems (See Daniel 7:24). If the beast of Daniel’s vision represented, as he tells us it did, the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Graeco-Macedonian and Roman Empires, it is fairly evident that this beast will represent the whole combination of world-powers, “the parliament of nations,” and that is why he is pictured as having ten horns and seven heads and on his horns ten diadems—seven and ten both being biblical numbers to express entirety or completeness. Here, then, is presented the world’s last and only perfect potentate. It is a significant thing, as Haldeman remarks, that already we have had seriously advocated the idea that ten of the strong nations of the earth should form themselves into an alliance to regulate the commerce of the earth, and to determine its mooted questions.

HIS SPEECH IS BLASPHEMOUS!

“And upon his heads the name of blasphemy . . . and he opened his mouth for blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in the heaven.”

For a Biblical definition of blasphemy one needs only to remember that when Jesus had said to the man sick of the palsy, “**Thy sins be forgiven thee,**” certain of the scribes said within themselves, “**This man blasphemeth**” In other words, He assumed prerogatives that belonged to God alone.

Had he been less than God, the charge of the scribes would have been justified.

That is the very assumption that is to characterize the Antichrist. Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonians (2:3, 4) says, “**That man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**”

There are not a few interpreters of the Word, and among them some of the most scholarly and devout, that believe that this feature of the Antichrist finds its perfect fulfillment in the Papacy. They call our attention to the fact that time and again Roman pontiffs have been guilty of this blasphemy, and have encouraged the people to join with them in its emphasis.

Dr. Gordon in his “*Ecce Venit*” catalogues a list of these claims, as do also other interpreters especially H. Grattan Guiness. Gordon tells us that Alexander VI., moving to his consecration, passed under a triumphal arch, on which was inscribed, “Caesar was a man; Alexander is a god.”

- Marcellus, in an address to Pope Leo X at the fifth Lateran Council, exclaims, “Thou art another God on earth.”
- Gregory II boasts to the Greek emperor: “All the kings of the West reverence the pope as a God on earth.”
- Pope Nicholas wrote: “Wherefore, if those things which I do be said to be done, not of man, but of God, what can you make me but God?”

Scores of like claims, equally blasphemous, have from time to time passed the lips of popes and prelates. Yet the study of prophetic subjects compels us to adopt the view expressed by Dr. Parsons in the Prophetic Conference, held in New York City in 1879, and concurred in by Haldeman and other great scholars:

“While this last feature of the reign of Antichrist finds its shadow in the pretensions of the papacy, we still believe that a more concrete future fulfillment, springing out of present and patent channels of blasphemy and corruption, will be seen.”

He would be a poor observer of his times that did not see that they are tending more and more to this final consummation.

One of the most dangerous doctrines that has broken out, in the ranks of the hitherto orthodox, is that that insists upon deifying man; and is equally urgent in humanizing God. One needs only to study the subjects treated in books and expounded from the pulpit, to find how prominent a place has been given to these two— “*the deity of man*,” and “*the humanity of God*.”

Protestantism at present, therefore, has among its numbers, leaders not a few whose theology will as surely result in paving the way for the coming blasphemer as has the papacy’s past claims and conduct. The professed prophets of the present are doing the preliminary work for the great false prophet whose chief business it will be to make the earth and them that dwell in it, to worship the first beast, or man, that shall exalt himself to the place of God over all. Communism is just now its most blatant expression.

HIS SOVEREIGNTY WILL BE EXTENSIVE

“And the dragon gave him his power; and his seat, and great authority; . . . and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations, And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”

This is not in consonance with the now popular cry of “Peace!” “Peace!” But what have we that believe the Word of God, to do with Moscow propaganda?

The sainted Gordon was seldom more eloquent, and never more truthful, than when he said:

“Prophecy is the mould in which history is cast; no violence of man, no convulsions of nations can either break that mould or constrain the course of history, that the one should not answer to the other point by point, feature by feature!”

And, unless God be a liar, and this Book which He declares to be His “Revelation,” deceptious, the sovereignty of Alexander the Great, who is reputed to have wept because there were no more worlds to conquer, will prove to have been an insignificant reign, when, in the light of unfolding history, it will be compelled to endure comparison with that which the Dragon, or Satan, will deliver over into the hand of this **“prince to come.”**

His reign shall be exactly coextensive with that that is pledged to the coming Christ, for while the latter is to reign **“from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth,”** the former is to have **“power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations, And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life.”**

There are only about ten great powers in the whole earth today; only about ten potentates who escape the epithet “petty.” In recent years these more and more claim the right to make conquest of the lesser people and uncrown the little kings. Witness the fate of Selassie! Who can tell what will be the end of this imperialism? Will it not take us back again to the doctrine once regnant in the world, namely, “that might is right,” and, by the course of history which men shall come to regard as natural, result eventually in that prophesied consummation, a single sovereign whose exalted subordinates shall give him the character of the beast wearing **“seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns”?**

HIS TIME WILL BE SHORT

And **“power was given unto him to continue forty and two months,”** **“time, times, and a half a time,”** three years and a half—the brief season in which this Antichrist shall exercise his sovereignty, and be able to put into effect his evil and destructive designs.

We are not at all able to agree with the brethren that make these “1,260 days” mean so many years.

There are three objections to that interpretation, either of which is sufficient.

- First, it is speculative rather than scriptural;
- Second, the time is already passed when, tried by that theory, the end of the age would have been on;
- Finally, if that were true, one might figure out the end of the age, of which knoweth no man.

In favor of taking this literally, Reason and Revelation agree. Jesus Christ Himself, in speaking of the end, says, “**Then shall be great tribulation such as was not seen since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be; and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh will be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened**” (Matthew 24:21-22).

There are many that remember what three and a half years of World War meant; what weariness; what sickness; what wounds; what slaughter; what bereavements; what bankruptcy of nations; what despair; and yet, who imagines that those days were even a faint shadow of the sorrows that shall characterize this time of tribulation?

It is of the mercy of God, therefore, that while Christ is to reign on earth for a thousand years, and at the end of that time, His peaceful sovereignty is to be transferred to heaven, to continue forever; the bloody reign of His great antagonist, the Antichrist, shall be cut short in three and a half seasons, and this usurper shall meet his doom (Revelation 20:1-3).

It has been so from the first!

- When Satan triumphed in the Garden of Eden, almost instantly his Conqueror came;
- While Haman sat at the king's table, the scaffold was building;
- When Belshazzar exalted himself to heaven, that night he was slain;
- While Herod was listening to the huzzahs of the people, who were proclaiming him God, he was smitten of worms and died.

And right at that time when this Antichrist shall have clutched the sceptre of universal sovereignty, the hand of might and power shall touch him, his kingdom shall be overthrown, and he himself cast down to chains and imprisonment to be followed by eternal torment, for John's vision was not ended.

He says, “**And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone**” (Revelation 19:19-20).

THE SECOND BEAST—THE FALSE PROPHET

As Christ had His forerunner—John the Baptist—and is to have His Elijah for His second appearance, so the Antichrist will have his prophet.

HE WILL ASSUME THE MEEKEST OF MIENS

“He had two horns like a lamb.” The lamb is the most docile and kindly of the domestic animals. The two horns here are commonly accepted as being symbols of dual character. He claims on the one side, to be a scientist, and on the other, to be a religionist. One of these is the expression of reason; and the other of revelation. The world today is daffy over every man that makes the same claim. As in Hawthorne’s *“Great Stone Face,”* it waits for “the coming man”—a Christian-Scientist, if you please!

BUT HIS SPEECH WILL BETRAY HIM

“He spake as a dragon.” The voice is a marvelous thing. There is no feature of life that better evidences character, whether among men or beasts. The roar of the lion tells the whole story of his make-up; a wolf may sham membership in a flock of sheep, but when he opens his mouth it is to howl and not to bleat.

And so the voice of this beast is the voice of the dragon. When we have become well acquainted with men, our trust or distrust is decided by what passes the lips. The tongue tells the tale of character. And when this False Prophet shall appear, the man that is familiar with the Word of God will be the first to detect his falsehoods, and know that whatever his assumptions, he is Satan’s agent, set to turn men from the truth to believe a lie!

It will argue nothing that he is able *to present a prophet’s credentials.*

His signs, making even fire to come down out of heaven to earth in the sight of men, will not suffice. Miracles in themselves will never be a proof of divine appointment. Pretenders have always, through the power of the evil one, been able to duplicate, in large measure, the wonders that were evidently divine.

You remember that when Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent, the magicians of Egypt **“cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents.”** Here the Devil imitates the divine miracle.

And you will remember that the imitation continued unto the swarm of flies. There were magicians and sorcerers in the apostles’ time doing mighty works—the power of the evil one. In the day of Moses, God declared the law by which all should be judged.

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

“And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee” (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

Catholicism has its wonders; Theosophy its signs; Spiritualism and Christian Science their miracles; they are as well attested as were those of the sorcerers of Moses' time. People have gone over to them in great numbers because they have seen these things, falsely supposing that a miracle is always an evidence of divine appointment.

The true test, however, for all fads of faith, a test before which the false prophet himself is to fall, is the test of Deuteronomy.

- One ought to ask, “What doctrine do these people teach?”
- One ought to ask whether they lead to the true and living God, or away from Him.

Having learned that; he can settle in a moment whether they are from above or below, prophets, true or false. *The reason so many people are misled in these matters is that they are so poorly acquainted with the Word of God.*

You can remind them of the words of Isaiah, **“To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them,”** but you can help them in nothing if they are not familiar with the law and the prophets.

We meet people that smile sweetly, and at the same time are members of the Christian Science Church; we have never yet met a Theosophist, a Spiritist or a Christian Scientist that was decently familiar with the Word of God.

In this, there is a word of awful warning!

A man must be grounded in the knowledge of the truth, or else stand in constant danger of giving his worship to the Devil, honestly mistaking him for the Christ of God. For this beast will not take on some hideous mien, so that it will be difficult for men to bow before him; on the contrary, peculiar attractiveness will characterize him, so that the whole earth will wonder after him.

Like Jesus Christ, he shall take upon him “the form of a man,” for it is written, **“he that hath understanding let him count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man.”**

Some believe he will be Judas Iscariot, who, by Christ himself was called “the son of perdition”; who by three and a half years of experience is familiar with all the claims of the Son of God; who, by coming up out of the earth, or from the dead, would have occasion for his pretensions of divine power; and who, because he was a Jew, could lay claim to being the long expected One; and who, by signs and wonders, being in the employ of Satan, could deceive the very elect.

But no matter who he is, remember that he is a man, filling up the office of the false prophet, leading his followers to worship the Antichrist, who is the dragon's first confederate in his contest for sovereignty of the earth. Add to this attractiveness the elements of destruction, the threat of death against all that refuse to follow him, and the cowardly of earth will join with this deceiver and go to make up his company.

Many believers will perish in defense of their newly found faith, but a remnant of God's ancient people will flee into the wilderness, as already presented, under the figure of the woman, and the earth will unite in the tribulation of the ages.

It is a dark day when our young men go forth to battle, listening to the martial tread, the blast of the bugle, the command to march. We realize that wounds are ahead of them; but even that prospect is not without its pleasing features, for every good man hopes that out of such a conflict will come righteousness; through the suffering and slaughter of some, a great blessing will be accomplished for many others.

And so we want to present

SOME FEATURES OF THE FINAL CONFLICT

In that day the Dragon will face the Lamb. It is a marvelous picture that after having presented this awful Dragon and his dreadful confederate—the Antichrist—and the False Prophet—this trinity of iniquity that the world fears, then John goes on to say, "**I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion.**" But what is a Lamb against such power? What can this gentle domestic one do against the ferocity of these beasts of earth? Rather, what can He not do? He is "**the Lion of the tribe of Judah,**" also! Gentle He is, yet the greatness of God is with Him; kindly, yet the light from His face shall kindle a conflagration in which this whole hellish host shall find its doom. And God shall prove, in this end of the age, that He can, with the weak, confound the mighty.

You remember the old story of Julian, the apostate, the tyrant and persecutor, and potentate of sorcery! You will remember that he had sold himself to the Devil, and put his officer, Mercurius, to death because of his constancy to the Christian faith. There is a tradition to the effect that when Julian led his army against the Persians, St. Basil the Great was favored with miraculous vision. He saw a woman of great beauty seated on a throne, and around her a great multitude of angels. She commanded one of them, saying, "Go, waken Mercurius, who sleepeth in a sepulchre, that he may slay Julian, the apostate, that brought blasphemy against me and against my son."

In the battle next day, when the wicked Emperor was at the head of his army, an unknown warrior of plain face, mounted on a white charger, spurred forward and pierced Julian through the body, and then as suddenly vanished as if he had been an apparition. They carried Julian to his tent, and, putting his hand beneath the wound, he caught some of the blood that flowed from it, and flinging it into the air, he exclaimed with his last breath, "Thou hast conquered; Galilean, thou hast conquered!"

One day this greater apostate from the faith, Satan, himself, and his associates, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, shall be compelled to cry in similar speech to the Lamb, “Thou hast conquered! Thou hast conquered!”

THAT DAY THE DECEIVED WILL FACE THE FAITHFUL

For with the Lamb are “**an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written on their foreheads,**” and on their lips will be the song of redemption. Their characters will be spotless and undefiled, and in their mouths will be found no lie. It will be into the face of these that the faithless will be compelled to look.

The author never reads the latter part of Matthew without feeling the great significance of that scene; and one of the chief sorrows of those that shall be upon the left, when the Son of Man shall come in all His glory, to divide men one from the other, will be facing the faithful; will be the view of that triumphant throng, that on His right hand will be answering His welcome, “**Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world**”

THAT DAY FALSEHOOD WILL BE MEET BY TRUTH

The language of the false prophet will still be in the ears of men; the speech of the true will be set to note. For the faithful will sing as it were a new song before the throne and before the elders, viz., the song of Redemption. The cry of the False Prophet, which had bidden men to worship the Beast of Dragon appointment, will be met by the song of the saved, saying, “**With a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.**”

We have given all too little emphasis to the power of truth in this present age. If men only realized how potent it is against error, they would publish it the more. The author of “*Quo Vadis*” has a very fine touch in reporting Cleophas, who related how Jesus had been seen by himself and another; by Mary Magdalene, by his disciples, Thomas being absent, and after eight days, Thomas being present. And how Thomas fell at His feet and cried, “**My Lord and my God.**” And Vinicius, listening, something wonderful took place in him; he forgot for the moment where he was. He began to lose the feeling of reality, of measure, of judgment. He stood in the presence of two impossibilities. He could not believe what the old man said, yet felt that he must be blind or lost to reason if he admitted that the man that said, “I saw,” was lying.

Oh, would God, that those of us that know the truth, and enjoy it, might, as Cleophas, tell men what we know, for in this final conflict the crisis for men’s souls will depend upon truth.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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