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"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

CONTENTS

IN THE HEAVENLIES	49
THE HEBREW PSALTER	53
WORLD LEADERS IN THE FINAL CRISES	61
NOTES ON HEBREWS	65
THE THEOPHANIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	72
THE WISDOM LITERATURE OF THE BIBLE	76
THE PROMISED DELIVERER	78
THE PLACE OF GOOD WORKS	87
"GOODNESS"	90
URBANE	94

Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

WORLD LEADERS IN THE FINAL CRISES

BY W. W. FEREDAY

II. The Antichrist

The Antichrist has had a multitude of forerunners. As early as the First Century John told the babes in the family of God, "ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists (1 John 2:18). The restless enemy of God and His truth has never failed to find instruments willing to defy and defame the Christ of God. The centuries have produced them in abundance. In his Second Epistle the aged Apostle warned the elect lady and her children not to admit into their home any subverter of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, saying, "this is the deceiver and the antichrist" (2 John 8). But however numerous such evil workers may have been in the past, and are today, the personal antichrist is yet to come, an outstanding antagonist of God and His Christ, exceeding all others in blasphemy and arrogance.

Two mistaken notions tend to obscure the minds of many as to this arch-transgressor. Some think of him as a coming world-Emperor, and others believe that he is in power already as head of the Papal system. Both these mistakes direct attention to Rome as the seat of the antichrist, but Scripture connects him with Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews around Him, "I am come in my Father's Name and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive" (John 5:43). Our Lord clearly referred to the antichrist, who will arise among the Jewish people, and be welcomed as more to their taste than the Christ of God.

"You have heard that Antichrist shall come." Thus before Apostolic energy ceased in the Church the saints were given instruction concerning the fearful end of Christian profession. Tares had already been sown amongst God's wheat; the birds of the air (Satan's emissaries) had already built their nests in the branches of the mustard tree (Matt. 13); and some had even found a place amongst the Apostles themselves, although only for a time (1 John 2:19). These evils would continue and develop until the end, as Jude so solemnly shows in his short Epistle.

The Antichrist is Satan's supreme effort. He will not be content with high-sounding titles such as we are already familiar with; he will go much further, and will boldly declare that he is God (2 Thess. 2:4). Jerusalem will be the centre and hot-bed of this iniquity. From that city the truth of the Gospel went forth nineteen centuries ago; from the same city will go forth Satan's greatest lie. When Paul wrote so explicitly in his second letter to the Thessalonians of the man of sin, the son of perdition, the thoughts of those who heard the Epistle read in their midst would instinctively turn to Jerusalem. The city was still standing, and the Aaronic priesthood was still functioning in the temple; the Apostle's words concerning the Devil-inspired intruder could only refer to a terrible evil to be set up there. A few years after Paul thus wrote to the Thessalonians Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed by the Romans, but the words of the Apostle stand, and must yet be fulfilled. Two days before our Lord was crucified He told His disciples that not one stone of the temple should be left upon another. All should be thrown down; yet he went on to speak of "the Abomination of desolation" (an idol) standing in the Holy Place, which the godly of that day should regard as a danger signal, and flee for their lives. Thus in Matt. 24 the Lord visualised destruction in verse 2 and construction in verse 15—the then existing temple to be destroyed, and another temple to be built in the last days. It may be fairly deduced from His words that Jews will be back in the land in the last days, with their ancient system restored at least in measure. Things are moving along these lines as we write. Rev. 11:1-14 describes conditions in Jerusalem in the end-time. It seems certain that John did not write the Apocalypse until about 30 years after the fearful catastrophe inflicted by the Romans, yet he was shown a vision of a temple with worshippers therein. John beheld faithful witnesses testifying in the streets of Jerusalem and slain for their testimony, "the Beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit" being primarily responsible for their murder. In Matt. 24; 2 Thess. 2, and Rev. 11, we have clear predictions of things which have not yet come to pass, and they all combine to show Jews back in the land of their fathers with a temple in their midst, all the work of infidel self-will. This will be all swept aside at the appearing of Christ. The usurper will be overthrown, and Christ as David's true heir, will reign in Zion; the defiled temple will

be destroyed to make room for a new temple to be built according to Divine specifications, to which the glory of Jehovah will return after twenty-six centuries absence (compare Ezek. 11:22-23 with chap. 43:3-5).

The Scriptures present the Antichrist to us in three principal characters: (1) as king in Israel; (2) as the False Prophet co-operating with the Western Beast; and (3) as the religious mis-leader of the Jews, and also of Christendom.

(1) Daniel 11 is occupied with the doings of many kings—Medo-Persian, Greek, etc., but these are only introduced in order to lead up to the king in Israel's land, who will exceed in wickedness all who have been before him. The Angel's message to the Prophet down to verse 35 deals with about three centuries of intrigue and strife between various kings of the North and South. All this was fulfilled before our Lord was born. In verse 36 the prophecy passes abruptly from the doings of more than twenty centuries ago and speaks of the "time of the end" (v. 40). The king of verse 36 has not yet arisen, but the description of him is so like that of the Man of Sin in 2 Thess. 2 that we need not doubt that the same person is spoken of in both chapters. "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods." As we write, the Jews in Palestine have a republican regime, but this will not satisfy them for long, their desire being to revive ancient glories. They will therefore in due course have a king, as great a contrast to Him whom they crucified as could be imagined. Both Absalom and Adonijah typify the Antichrist, each in self-will seeking to reign in Jerusalem in opposition to God's anointed. The Herod of Acts 12 is also a picture of him. He killed James and imprisoned Peter, the Jews fully approving his evil deeds. The Antichrist of the future will slay some of God's witnesses and persecute others, the mass of the Jews being with him in it. The Herod of Acts 12 came to a miserable end, but the end of the Antichrist will be even more fearful.

When the Antichrist is reigning in Jerusalem the King of the South (Egypt) will invade the land, also the King of the North. The last verse of Daniel 11 speaks of the end of the King of the North, not of the Antichrist.

(2) The False Prophet of Rev. 13; 16; and 19 shows us the

Antichrist in another form. As "the Beast coming up out of the earth" (Rev. 13:11), he is a political power, but being king of a small nation he is not great politically. The Apocalypse shows him as acting in collusion with the Beast out of the sea (the Roman head). As the False Prophet, with influence wherever the first Beast rules, he is more dangerous than as King in Jerusalem. He performs striking miracles, even calling down fire from heaven (Rev. 13:12-15). This is another mark of identification with the Man of Sin of 2 Thess. 2, "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders". It is not said that the blasphemous head of the Western Empire performs miracles; these are attributed solely to the False Prophet, otherwise the Antichrist. Also, it is not said that the first Beast demands worship for himself; the False Prophet demands it for him. There will be three objects of worship in the last crisis: (a) the Beast in opposition to the Father; (b) the Antichrist in opposition to the Son and (c) the Dragon in opposition to the Holy Spirit. Miserable parody of Divine realities with fearful eternal consequences for all three transgressors (Rev. 20:10).

(3) Men are today clamouring for a new religion, saying that all the ancient religions, including Christianity, are worn out. Satan will be permitted to meet the demand ere long; and, terrible to say, the peoples who have had the Bible in their hands will be the most ardent adherents of the new order. In one brief verse the Holy Spirit puts the Jews and Christian apostates together in this awful matter: "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). In the first clause of this verse we have Jewish unbelief, and in the second Christian apostacy. The new religion will suit men's carnal tastes. There will be no denunciation of sin, no teaching of responsibility to God, no warning of eternal punishment, and no word about Christ. *Man* will be exalted, for the Antichrist will be Adam fully developed. The first man desired to be "as God"; the Antichrist will boldly say, "I am God".

The harlot, Babylon the Great, must be destroyed before the new religion is established. The gaudy, blood-thirsty woman of Rev. 17 represents the re-united Christendom which so many religious people desire. After all true believers in the Lord Jesus have been translated to the Father's House, the hindrance to re-

union will cease to exist, and the whole of Christendom will come together under the leadership of Papal Rome. Its power will be so great that it will for a time control the State, but the Beast and his ten confederate kings will turn upon the whore and "shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire". This will be the end of Christian profession. The way will then be clear for the open worship of MAN, with its centre, not in Rome, but in Jerusalem. 2 Thess. 2:11-12 shows that God will send the religious multitudes "a strong delusion" that they should believe "*the lie*." The truth is today near to them and they do not love it, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. It is a terrible thought that the empty religionists of our time who "profess and call themselves Christians" will eagerly embrace the new religion, and, like the demon-possessed swine of Gadara, will rush downwards to perdition (Mark 5).

Let us not miss the moral lesson of the foregoing. All evil is attributed to self-will. "The king shall do according to his will" (Dan. 11:40; cf. vv. 3 and 16). Our blessed Lord, when coming into the world, said, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8). Our path is to follow Him; God's Word our study, His will our joy. To souls perplexed and tried the word comes, "You have need of patience, that after ye have *done the will of God*, ye might receive the promise, for yet a very little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry". (Heb. 10:36-37).

(*To be continued*)

NOTES ON HEBREWS

BY W. E. VINE, M.A. (Lond.)

Chap. 8: 1-6a *

Verse 1.—*Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this:*—The writer is doing more than summing up what he has stated about Christ (as is indicated by the A.V., "sum"). He is not merely gathering up all the glories of Christ as a High Priest. That is so in one way, but what is meant is that the "chief point" is that Christ is "a minister of the sanctuary, and

* See Analysis of these verses in last issue.