



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

The Antichrist - His Image and Prophet

by Stephen A. Toms

*(This message was given on Friday, May 25th, 2001 at one of the monthly meetings of the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony in London. The message was recorded and may be obtained, along with the whole series on this topic preached by a variety of speakers, from the **SGAT website**).*

Mr B W Newton used to say that when we study the Scriptures we should pay attention to detail. This is true for every aspect of Biblical teaching, but it is particularly true of prophecy. We find that people very often deal with prophetic statements in a very careless way. It is exceedingly important that, when we read God's Holy Word, we look carefully to see what is actually said. Let us see what the Scripture teaches about Antichrist's image and prophet.

His image

Matthew 24:15 says, 'When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand(ing) in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand).' This is something for which to look. Many in these days like to talk about watching for the coming of the Lord, but how are they watching? The disciples were told not to stand gazing up into heaven (Acts 1:11), and it is no good our merely looking up into the sky. That is not watching for the coming of the Lord.

The way to watch for the second coming is to take careful note of what is said in Scripture and watch for those signs of which we are told. The events which the Bible tells us will happen immediately before the coming of the Lord are the things which will cause us to know that it will not be long before the Lord Jesus Christ will return. Some men seem to think that there is nothing to occur before the Saviour returns! Yet this chapter, (and it is not the only place in Holy Scripture) emphasises that there are things that will happen.

The disciples asked the Lord Jesus Christ three questions (verse 3) - 'When shall these things (the casting down of the stones of the temple) be?' 'What shall be the sign of Thy coming (presence, parousia)?' 'And of the end of the world (not kosmos, 'the material world; but 'aion,' the age)?' So there were three questions asked, and the Lord Jesus Christ answered them. The disciples may have thought that all three things were to occur together, whereas, of course, that was not so. The destruction of the temple was not to be at the same time as the coming of the Lord or the end of the age.

There are events to happen before the second coming, and for which we are to watch, and amongst them, we are told specifically by the Lord Jesus Christ that there should be this abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, which would stand in the holy place. Other signs are mentioned in this chapter, and elsewhere in Scripture, but this is one of the things for which we are to look. It will happen.

The Lord Jesus emphasised it by saying, 'Whoso readeth, let him understand.' God's people ought to understand what is written in the Book of Daniel about this abomination of desolation. It may be that in the majority of evangelical churches today few know much concerning the Book of Daniel or the abomination of desolation. Yet Jesus said that we should understand it. Why do Christians not take notice of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ? We should read the Book of Daniel and understand what is being said; and we should understand too what the Lord Jesus said about Daniel's prophecy. There will be a time when the abomination of desolation shall stand in the holy place. That is one of the signs of the coming again of the Lord. It has not yet happened.

Some preachers use the phrase, 'If the Lord tarry tonight.' It is not possible for the Lord to come before the promised signs have been fulfilled any more than He could have come down from the cross. These things must happen before He can come again. The phrase, 'if the Lord tarry' is not a Scriptural one. The Lord will not tarry for ever, but there is no possibility of His coming before these signs have actually taken place, one of which is this abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. Do I have to tell Protestants that the



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

holy place is in Jerusalem, not Rome?

I received a book which was posted from John L Bray, and the title was 'Matthew 24 Fulfilled.' To say the predictions of this chapter have all happened is rather strange. In verse 30 we read, 'They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.' How can this be said to have happened? And yet, it seems to me that there are many ministers in these days who really believe that Matthew 24 has been fulfilled, and they go to endless arguments, weaving their way around words, to prove their point. Let us take the plain statements of Holy Scripture which inform us that one of the signs of the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ will be this abomination of desolation which will stand in the holy place.

John L Bray, in his book, refers to the word 'ye,' and he argues that as Christ was speaking to those disciples, they would actually see the abomination of desolation. But, a few chapters further on, in Matthew 28:19, we read, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Does this mean only those disciples were to do that? The next verse continues 'Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world (age).' Does this mean that, because He was speaking to those disciples, they would live to the end of the age? No! He was speaking to them as representing the body of believers, and the message is for the whole church throughout this present age.

There will be some believers alive when the abomination of desolation is made to stand in the holy place, and this message is for such. When they see this idol then they will know that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Abomination of desolation

What is this abomination of desolation? Deuteronomy 27:15 gives us help. It says, 'Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto Jehovah, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place.' So, it is quite plainly stated that an abomination is a graven or molten image.

In Isaiah 44:9-20, the prophet describes the folly of one who takes a tree and 'burneth part thereof in the fire ... and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image.' Then in verse 19, it says, 'shall I make the residue thereof an abomination?' Here God is saying through the prophet that the part of the tree made into a graven image is an abomination. So an abomination is an image, and Jesus specifically emphasised the importance of Daniel's words concerning this image, which will be an abomination to God.

It is described in the Scripture as 'the abomination that maketh desolate.' It desolates. It will not bring any person near to God. We live in a day when many seem to think that idols bring them closer to God. They speak of 'aids to worship.' It is foolish for men to imbibe the thought that an idol can help them draw nigh to God. God calls an idol an abomination.

Let us see what Daniel said. In Daniel 9, we are told that while Daniel was praying, the angel Gabriel came to him and told him about seventy weeks. The word used here means 'a period of seven' and there is no equivalent in the English language. It has therefore been translated 'week' because a week is the only period of seven that we have. It is similar to our word 'score' meaning twenty, or 'century' which means hundred. You will remember that Jacob served seven years for Rachel and it was described in Genesis 29:27-30 as a 'week.'

Gabriel told Daniel about these seventy weeks, which were seventy periods of seven years. He mentioned seven weeks and then threescore and two weeks (verse 25). This gave a total of 69 weeks out of the seventy. Then Gabriel informed the prophet that after that seven and sixty-two weeks 'shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself.' So after the 69 weeks, the time should be when the Lord Jesus Christ would die. If you work that out, you will find that 69 x 7 (483 years) was exactly and precisely the time from Daniel's prophecy to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Then Gabriel spoke about the remaining week, the final 7 years of this present age. Verse 27 says, '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.' It was to these words in the Book of Daniel that the Lord Jesus Christ was referring when He said, 'Whoso readeth, let him understand.' We ought to understand what Daniel's words mean.

I once heard a brother speaking on this verse 27, and he thought it referred to the death of the Lord Jesus putting an end to all other sacrifices. But apart from the dates not then being right, God is speaking here about an abomination which makes desolate. That is not what the Saviour did by His death. The Lord Jesus Christ made an atonement for sin, but this verse refers to someone who will bring in an abomination that makes desolate.

What then is this about? It is a prophecy concerning the antichrist making a covenant with the Jewish people for one week and in the midst of the week, that is, after three and a half years, he will stop the Jews having their worship. Then, this abomination of desolation will be taken into the holy place, the temple in Jerusalem. When this abomination appears, then there will be unparalleled persecution against the Jewish people, and that is why the Lord Jesus Christ counselled to flee.

There is another reference in Daniel 11:31. This chapter, like Matthew 24, speaks of two periods, and there have been differences of opinion whether this verse is included in the first period or in the second period. We have a few copies of *Watching and Waiting*, April 1992, which we could supply whilst stocks last. In that magazine there is an article by Pastor James Payne entitled 'The Last Wars and the Wise.' It is an exposition of Daniel 11 given at an S.G.A.T. conference in April, 1949.

The verse 31 says, 'Arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.' But if Daniel's prophecy was speaking of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, that evil man was a type of the antichrist who will arise in the last days. So, when Daniel here wrote about the abomination that maketh desolate, even if it was about the action of Antiochus, certainly it would also be a picture of the last days.

The words of chapter 12 definitely refer to the last days. Daniel 11:40 specifically states, 'at the time of the end.' We are told in this passage of wars. Our rulers keep talking about peace, but wars will occur. Chapter 12:11 says, 'From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.' Now that is a period of just over three and a half years, the second half of the last week, which, of course, commences in the middle of that week.

Antichrist will 'obtain the kingdom by flatteries' (Daniel 11:21). The Jewish people will accept him after centuries of nations being against them. Even now, the media try to press upon us that Arabs are right and Israel are wrong. Well, antichrist will come and look like the deliverer; he will let the Jewish people have their temple worship, and they will receive him, but in the middle of the week (the 7 years), he will break his word and then introduce this abomination of desolation.

His prophet

The two (the image and the prophet) are inseparably linked, and that is why they are together in our subject. We read about this prophet in Revelation 13:11-18. He is called a 'beast,' but that word used in this chapter of the antichrist and his prophet, could more literally be rendered 'wild beast.'

Antichrist's prophet is certainly involved with the bringing of the image of desolation into the holy place, the temple at Jerusalem. This prophet, described as a wild beast, came up out of the earth (verse 11). The first wild beast came up out of the sea (verse 1), the Great or Mediterranean Sea. But the second wild



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

beast, this prophet of the antichrist, comes up out of the earth. The word 'earth' could be translated land' and is so translated 42 times in the New Testament. The first time the word is used is in Matthew 2:6, 'And thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah.' And so, it seems to indicate this second wild beast, this prophet of antichrist, will be connected with the Land of Israel itself. That would help to cause him to be received by the Israel people.

It is interesting to note that it says in verse 11 that this wild beast had the look of a lamb. The word there is 'a little lamb' or 'a young lamb.' Many times in the Book of the Revelation this term 'Lamb' is used to describe the Lord Jesus Christ, and a capital 'L' is employed. Once a small 'l' is used, and it is in this verse. This false prophet will look like a lamb but he will speak like a dragon. What a fellow! He appears like a lovely little lamb, but he has the voice of a dragon. This should remind us that there is an emphasis in the Scripture on speaking. Jesus said, 'O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned' (Matthew 12:34-37). How important are our words! This prophet will be an evil man, although he will look like a lamb, but his words prove that he will be like a dragon.

Christians should give heed to an important statement in Isaiah 8:20, 'To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.' Yes, words are important things, and this man will speak like a dragon. That is a pattern common amongst the servants of Satan. It will be so with this false prophet but it has happened throughout the centuries. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:15, 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.' This false prophet is the height of evil, but this deceit characterises all apostates.

In Revelation 13:13 it says, 'He doeth great wonders (signs) so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.' Jesus said, 'An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh after a sign,' but when this man appears, people will be looking for signs. And are not people looking for signs today? Many want to see something supernatural. They are not content with the preaching of the pure Word of God. If they could see something wonderful happen, then they could think that God is in it.

But the devil can work wonders. And that is how it will be with this second wild beast. He doeth great wonders or great signs and can even make fire come down from heaven. That will be a temptation for the Jewish people. They were told in their Old Testament Scriptures, in Malachi 4:5, that God would send Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. Elijah stood on Mount Carmel and brought fire down from heaven. It was the power of God that did it, but the people saw it as Elijah bringing down the fire that consumed the sacrifice. And the Jewish people are still today looking for Elijah. When they have their passover, they leave a spare seat for Elijah. With these people looking for Elijah and then there arises this prophet who will bring in this image and do this wonderful sign, bringing fire down from heaven, how easy it will be to believe that this is one whom God hath sent. Therefore they receive him.

But bringing fire down from heaven is no proof of being a servant of God. In the story of Job (Job 1:16) it was the work of Satan when seeking to destroy Job. A messenger told the patriarch, 'The fire of God is fallen from heaven.' So the bringing down of fire from heaven will not prove that the prophet is the servant of God.

There is another thing about this second wild beast. He will bring in this image, giving it the power to speak, 'and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed' (verse 15). God has more power than the false prophet and God is able to keep us and will always keep a remnant but this verse describes the action of the false prophet. He will seek to have killed all those who will not worship this abomination of desolation, this idol.



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

We have had a situation in England where people on the continent would not buy our meat because of B.S.E. It will be a similar situation which the false prophet will inaugurate, that people should not buy or sell except they have the mark of the first wild beast (verse 17).

In all these things we see that the false prophet (like the antichrist himself) has no toleration for those who will not submit to him. Christians will find it difficult to take a stand and do what is right. There will be no liberty. We can see what is happening in Europe at this present time. They desire a federal state controlling all member countries, and into this situation the antichrist, the first wild beast, will ultimately arise and then the second wild beast. Then there will be no toleration whatsoever. Those who do not accept the rule of the antichrist will be fiercely persecuted. It may seem amazing that we are told that we should have toleration towards evil men and their evil practices, yet when the antichrist arises, there will be no toleration shown by these two wild beasts. And incidentally, there is a trinity of evil, because Satan is involved in addition to the two wild beasts.

It is a kind of repetition of the events recorded in Daniel 3. All were told to worship a golden image and if any did not do so, they were to be thrown into the fiery furnace. That is what will happen when this final European Union, which will include the Middle East and parts of North Africa, is complete. The first wild beast, the antichrist will rise to the leadership, assisted by the false prophet.

This spirit has always been the spirit of the opponents of God. Psalm 94:20-21 says, 'Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? (i.e. making it illegal not to do what is wrong). They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.' That will certainly happen. This teaches us that the way of the false prophet is a way of slavery. Those who accept the mark of the beast in their right hand, or in their forehead, become a slave to the antichrist himself and the antichristian system.

There are many evangelical believers who pretend to believe the Bible and they do not understand this at all. It is all in the Bible and it could well happen in the days of some of us presently alive. We ought to know this sign spoken of by the Lord Jesus Christ. This abomination of desolation, this image of the antichrist is something for which we should be careful to look because it will remind us that it will then be about three and a half years before the Lord Jesus Christ shall return.

It will be very easy to fall in with the system of the false prophet. If we will do what he wants, we will be able to buy and sell. It is only a question of the worship of the image. But that is how it was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. If they had worshipped, or even pretended to worship, that golden image, they would not have been thrown into the fiery furnace. But by doing that, they would have been denying the God Who had saved them, the God they loved.

If Christians are made aware of these things, they ought to realise the danger of falling into the system of the antichrist, which is developing all around us, with accompanying pressures for us to go in the ways of the world, and accept worldly standards. To yield, and identify with the world is to deny the God Who bought us with His Blood. Those who are truly born of God ought to understand these things and be discerning about the times, and as events unfold, seek to cleave more and more to the Lord even if they should have to suffer for their fidelity. The Lord Jesus Christ said, 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' (Mark 8:36-37).