

## THE MAN OF SIN - SATAN'S COUNTERFEIT OF THE TRUE KINGDOM

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“And then shall that Wicked [man of sin] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming [presence]: whose coming [Christ's presence] is after [accompanied by] the working [an energetic operation] of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. ... Therefore brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” 2 Thes. 2:8-10, 15

After reading the first letter to the Thessalonians, some of the brethren in that congregation got the idea that Christ was already present. Paul wrote the second letter to them to correct that misunderstanding. He explained that before the second presence of Christ there would come the rise, development and revealment of the “man of sin”. 2 Thes. 2:1-6

The mystery of iniquity was already at work in the apostle's day, about A.D. 50. The spirit of the church became worldly. The things of the world were coveted. Gradually the hope of the church became a false hope, a delusive snare by which Satan led from one evil and error to another both of doctrine and of practice

Insidiously Satan planted and watered the seeds of error and developed the greatest and most influential system the world has ever known. This antichrist system took the place of the true Christ. The Apostle Paul calls “the man of sin” by several names: “that Wicked” one, “the mystery of iniquity”, and “the son of perdition”. The “antichrist” is a name given to the system by the Apostle John. Daniel calls it “the abomination that maketh desolate”. Our Lord calls it “the abomination of desolation” and a “beast”.

The book of Revelation is, in large part, a detailed symbolic prophecy concerning antichrist. “The man of sin” is a system and not a single individual. The history of Papacy fits the prophecies of the Bible. The apostate church was not “the man of sin” until she united with her lord and head the pope—the claimed vicegerent of Christ. Then the system became a religious empire, falsely styled Christendom.

At first Pagan Rome was in the way of the aspirations of Papal Rome. (2 Thes. 2:7) Under Constantine's reign all hindrance was removed and the organization of Papacy was speedily effected.

The popes came to be recognized as the head of the church, representing Christ, reigning in the church and over the nations. gradually, from about A.D. 300 to 494. Civil authority began to be exercised by the popes in A.D. 539. In A.D. 800 the pope crowned

Charlemagne as emperor. The pope recognized himself as King of Kings, “another God on earth”.

Morally, the darkest hour of antichrist’s dark reign was just before the Reformation. It is estimated that Papacy has, directly or indirectly, caused the death of 50 millions (50,000,000) of people over a period of 1300 years. Those labeled heretics by the “man of sin” in the darker past were put to death by burning, racking, drowning, starving, shooting, by having molten lead poured into the ears, by having the eyes gouged out, by being hammered to pieces on anvils, etc., etc.

The “man of sin” began to be recognized by Luther and others of his day. This resulted in a great religious reformation. Papacy has lost power, brought about by the awakening of the Reformation. Papacy still possesses its will to persecute the saints, but the power to do so is curtailed by the increase of knowledge and liberty in which the Bible has been the principal factor.

Ignorance and superstition are bulwarks of Papacy. Schools and Bibles have ever been antichrist’s unendurable enemies. The invention of movable type made it possible for the Bible to be printed by A.D. 1456. It is interesting to note that this date marks the center of time from A.D. 38 to 2874. Five years were required for the printing of the Bible. Five years before A.D. 38 brings us to the time of Pentecost. Had an ambitious spirit already developed in the church by A.D. 38? For certain it had developed by Paul’s day. By the Bible, antichrist has gradually been rendered “powerless” to oppress and wear out the saints. Since the time of the end began (1799) “the man of sin” is being consumed by the spirit of the Lord’s mouth (the truth). After 1800 Bible societies sprang up; these distributed Bibles to people in many parts of the world.

Antichrist’s policy has been somewhat softened and modified to seek to win back into sympathy and co-operation extremists of all Protestant denominations. Just recently Pope Paul VI canonized forty British martyrs of the Anglican reformation as saints and prayed that their blood might help heal the wounds of divided Christianity. The Pope extended a “respectful and affectionate greeting” to all Anglicans attending and said, “We indeed feel very close to them.” Nevertheless the system is doomed to destruction. Soon the bright shining of Christ’s presence will utterly destroy this counterfeit system and wholly free the world from the chains of its delusive claims and errors.

In 1878 judgment began with the nominal church in condemning to destruction the nominal systems—not the people. Since that time particularly the light of truth is penetrating every subject. Two great parties in the world have formed. On the one side are socialists, free-thinkers, infidels, discontents, and true liberty lovers. On the other side we find the rulers and aristocrats with the antichrist system in close sympathy. The faithful saints will remain separate from both.

As an evidence of the signs of the time, we note the gradual destruction of the antichrist system by the brightness of our Lord's second presence. Some of her own subjects feel that they no longer have to obey the commands of the pope. Many priests, nuns and others have left the system. They no longer believe all the teachings set forth by Papacy. (See 2 Kings 9:32, 33.) Some of the revenues which have flowed into that system are also being withheld. As a further indication of the weakness of that system, we have recently noted the words of the Pope who remarked that on past occasions he has offered his services as a mediator. He admitted, however, that no one wanted these services and that the most he could do was serve as a counselor.

The scriptures indicate that in this final death-struggle of antichrist, notwithstanding he shall seem to gain increased power in the world by new stratagems, deceptions, and combinations, yet the true Lord of earth, the King of kings in the time of his presence will prevail. During the great time of trouble antichrist will be utterly annihilated and his power and deception will be destroyed forever.

By divine intervention the trouble will be stopped. (Matt. 24:22) The earthly phase of the kingdom will be established. Righteousness will begin to prevail. Gradually all evil and evildoers will be cut off. It will take the entire time of Christ's second presence to completely do away with the evil resulting from the antichrist system as well as other sources. By the year 2874 (evening time of the millennial age) it shall be light. (Zech. 14:6, 7)

Rights and wrongs are being exposed such as never before. A great time of trouble is resulting. Through the antichrist system as well as other agencies, the devil is making a most desperate resistance to the new order of things.

During this dawning of the millennial age while the "man of sin" is beginning to be destroyed, the apostle indicates (2 Thes. 2:9-12) that Christ's second presence would be accompanied by an energetic operation of Satan with all power, signs, lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. The father of lies is particularly endeavoring to stop the completion of the promised seed. (Gen. 3:15) Those who are being deceived were not sufficiently in earnest in seeking out and using the truth provided as "meat in due season." Those misled received not the truth in the love of it but rather through custom, formality, or fear. Those not believing the truth but having pleasure in unrighteousness (untruth, deception, two-facedness) will be judged unworthy to share the millennial kingdom as joint-heirs with Christ. 2 Thes. 2:12

To the brethren called to become the bride of Christ, Paul exhorts: "Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." 2 Thes. 2:13-15