

The Antichrist Chapter 16 ISRAEL AND THE ANTICHRIST

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Transcript

The Antichrist

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It is a ground for thanksgiving that during the last three or four generations the people of God have given considerable attention to the prophecies of Scripture which treat of the future of Israel. The old method of "spiritualizing" these predictions, and making them apply to the Church of the present dispensation, has been discarded by the great majority of pre-millennarians. With a steadily increasing number of Bible students it is now a settled question that Israel, as a nation, shall be saved (Rom. 11:26), and that the promises of God to the fathers will be literally fulfilled under the Messianic reign of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 9:4). Jerusalem, which for so many centuries has been a by-word in the earth, will then be known as "the city of the great King" (Matthew 5:35). His throne shall be established there, and it shall be the gathering point for all nations (Zech. 8:23; 14:16-21). Then shall the despised descendants of Jacob be "the head" of the nations, and no longer the tail (Deut. 28:13); then shall the people of Jehovah's ancient choice be the center of His earthly government; then shall the Fig Tree, so long barren, "blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. 27:6). All of this is common knowledge among those who are in any-wise acquainted with dispensational truth. But the same Word of Prophecy which announces the glorious future awaiting the children of Israel, also contains another chapter in the history of this peculiar people; a chapter yet unfulfilled, setting forth a period in their history darker and sadder than any of their past experiences. Both the Old and New Testaments plainly tell of a season of suffering for the Jews which will be far more acute than even their afflictions of old. Daniel 12:1 says, "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." And in Matthew 24:21,22 we read, "For there shall be a great tribulation, such as was not 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 be saved." The reasons or causes of this future suffering of Israel are as follows. First, God has not fully visited upon Israel's children the sins of their fathers. "When Solomon and her kings had by transgression lost their blessings, and the glory of the reign of Solomon had faded away, the supremacy, which was taken from them, was given to certain Gentile nations, who were successively to arise and bear rule in the earth, during the whole period of Israel's rejection. The first of these was the Chaldean Empire under Nebuchadnezzar. The period termed by our Lord the "Times of the Gentiles," commences with the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It is a period coincident from its beginning to its close, with the treading down of

Jerusalem. 'Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles till the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled'. Nebuchadnezzar therefore, and the Gentile empires which have succeeded him, have only received their pre-eminence in consequence of Jerusalem's sin; and the reason why they were endowed with that pre-eminence was, that they might chasten Jerusalem; and when they shall have fulfilled that purpose, they shall themselves be set aside and be made, because of their own evil, "like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors'. In this we have another evidence that the earthly dispensations of God revolve around the Jews as their center" (B.W.Newton). A further reason or cause of the future sufferings of Israel lies in the rejection of their Messiah. First and foremost Christ was "a Minister of the Circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. 15:8). He was sent "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). And in marvelous grace He tabernacled among them. But He was not wanted. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Not only did they receive Him not, they "despised and rejected Him"; they "hated Him without a cause." So intense was their enmity against Him that with one voice they cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him." And not until His holy blood had been shed, and He had died the death of the accursed, was their awful malice against Him appeased. And for this they have yet to answer to God. Vengeance is His, and He will repay. Not yet has the murder of God's Son been fully avenged. It could not be during this "Day of Salvation." But the Day of Salvation will soon be over, and it shall be followed by "the great Day of His Wrath" (Rev. 6:17; Joel 2:11). Then will God visit the earth with His sore judgments, and though the Nations shall by no means escape the righteous retribution due them for their part in the crucifixion of Christ, yet, the ones who will be punished the most severely will be they who took the lead in that crime of crimes. The form which God's judgment will take upon the Jews is to be in full accord with the unchanging law of recompense—what they have sown, that shall they also reap. This was expressly affirmed by our Lord Jesus: "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). Because they rejected God's Christ, Israel shall receive the Antichrist. The same thing is stated in 2 Thessalonians 2:7—"For this cause (i.e. because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved) God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe the Lie." The immediate reference here, we believe, is to the Jews, though the principle enumerated will also have its wider application to apostate Christendom. The chief reason why God suffers the Man of Sin to come on the scene and run his awful course, is in order to inflict punishment upon guilty Israel. This is clearly taught in Isaiah 10:5, where of the Antichrist God says, "O Assyrian, the rod (the instrument of chastisement) of Mine anger, and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the street," and cf. our brief comments on Jeremiah 6:26,27 and 15:8 in chapter 9. It must be borne in mind that the Jews are to return to Palestine and there re-assume a national standing whilst yet unconverted. There are a number of passages which establish this beyond question. For example, in Ezekiel 22:19-22 we are told, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem, as they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in Mine anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of My wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof." The first six verses of Isaiah 18 describe how the Lord will gather the Jews to Jerusalem, there to be the prey of "fowls and beasts." The closing chapters of Zechariah lead to the inevitable conclusion that the Jews return to their land in unbelief, for if their national conversion takes place in Jerusalem (Zech. 12:10), they must have returned to it unconverted. When the Antichrist is manifested, great companies of the Jews will already be in Palestine, and in a flourishing condition. What, then, will be his relations with them? It is by no means easy

to furnish a detailed answer to this question, and at best we can reply but tentatively. Doubtless, there are many particulars respecting this and all other related subjects, which will not be cleared up until the prophecies concerning them have been fulfilled. We, today, occupy much the same position with regard to the predictions concerning the Antichrist, as the old Testament saints did to the many passages which foretold the coming of the Christ. Their difficulty was to arrange those passages in the order they were to be fulfilled, and to distinguish between those which spoke of Him in humiliation and those which foretold His coming glory. A similar perplexity confronts us. To ascertain the sequence of the prophecies relating to the Antichrist is a real problem. Even when we confine ourselves to those passages which speak of him in his connections with Israel, we have to distinguish between those which concern only the godly remnant, and those which relate to the great apostate mass of the Nation; and, too, we have to separate between those prophecies which concern the time when Antichrist is posing as the true Christ, and those which portray him in the final stage of his career, after he has thrown off his mask of religious pretension. It would appear that the first thing revealed in prophecy concerning the Antichrist's dealings with Israel is the entering into a "covenant" with them. This is mentioned in Daniel 9:27: "And he shall confirm the covenant (make a firm covenant, R.V.) with many for one week" i.e. seven years. The many here can be none other than the mass of the Jewish people, for they are the principal subjects of the prophecy. The one who makes this covenant is the "Prince that shall come" of the previous verse, the Head of the restored Roman Empire. Thus the relations between this Prince, the Antichrist, and the mass of the Jews shall, at the first, be relations of apparent friendship and public alliance. That this covenant is not forced upon Israel, but rather is entered into voluntarily by them, as seeking Antichrist's patronage, is clear from Isaiah 28:18, where we find God, in indignation, addressing them as follows—"And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." And this, we believe, supplies the key to Daniel 2:43. Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image and the interpretation given to Daniel, outlines the governmental history of the earth as it relates to Palestine, further details being supplied in the other visions found in the book of Daniel. "The earthly dispensations of God revolve around Jerusalem as their center. The method which it hath pleased God to adopt in giving the prophetic history of these nations, is in strict accord with this principle. As soon as they arose into supremacy and supplanted Jerusalem, prophets were commissioned, especially Daniel, to delineate their course. We might perhaps, have expected that their history would have been given minutely and consecutively from its beginning to its close. But instead of this, it is only given in its connection with Jerusalem; and as soon as Jerusalem was finally crushed by the Romans and ceased to retain a national position, all detailed history of the Gentile Empires is suspended. many a personage most important in the world's history has since arisen. Charlemagne has lived, and Napoleon—many a monarch, and many a conqueror—battles have been fought, kingdoms raised and kingdoms subverted—yet Scripture passes silently over these things, however great in the annals of the Gentiles. Because Jerusalem has nationally ceased to be, 1800 years ago, the detail of Gentile history was suspended- it is suspended still, nor will it be resumed until Jerusalem re-assumes a national position. Then the history of the Gentiles is again minutely given, and the glory and dominion of their last great King described. He is found to be especially connected with Jerusalem and the Land...The subject of the book of Daniel as a whole, is the indignation of God directed through the instrumentality of the Gentile Empires upon Jerusalem" (B.W. Newton "Aids to Prophetic Enquiry," first Series). The method which the Holy Spirit has followed in the book of Daniel is to give us, a general outline of Gentile dominion over Jerusalem, and this is found in the vision of the Image in chapter 2; and second, to fill in this outline, which is given in the last six chapters of that book. It is with the former we are now more particularly concerned. Much of the prophetic vision of Daniel 2 has already become

history. The golden head (Babylon), the silver breast and arms (Medo-Persia), the brazen belly and thighs (Greece), the iron legs (Rome), have already appeared before men. But the feet of the Image, "part of iron and part of clay," have to do with a time yet future. The break between the legs and feet corresponds with the break between the sixty-ninth and seventieth "weeks" of Daniel 9:24-27. The present dispensation comes in as a parenthesis during the time that Israel is outside the Land, dispersed among the Gentiles. What, then, is represented by the "iron and the clay" toes of the feet of the Image? If we bear in mind that this portion of the Image exactly corresponds to the seventieth week, we have an important key to the interpretation. Daniel 9:26,27 treats of the seventieth week—the "one week" yet remaining. These verses speak of the Prince (of the restored Roman Empire) making a seven years' Covenant with the Jews. Thus the prophecy concerning the seventieth week presents to us two prominent subjects—the Romans, at whose head is the Antichrist, and apostate Israel, with whom the Covenant is made. Returning now to Daniel 2 we find that when interpreting the king's dream about the Image, the prophet declares that the "iron" is the symbol for the "fourth kingdom" (v. 40), which was Rome, who succeeded Babylon, Persia, and Greece; the "feet" with their ten toes forecasting this Empire in its final form. Thus, we have Divine authority for saying that the "iron" in the feet of the Image represent the peoples who shall yet occupy the territory controlled by the old Roman Empire. In a word, the "iron" symbolizes the Gentiles—specifically those found in the lands which shall be ruled over by the "ten kings." Who, then, is symbolized by "the clay"? Here we are obliged to part company with the commentators, who unanimously take the clay to be the figure of democracy. So far as we are aware none of them has offered a single proof text in support of their interpretation, and as the Word is the only authority, to it we must look. Assured that Scripture is its own interpreter, we turn to the concordance to find out what the "clay" signifies elsewhere, when used symbolically. In Isaiah 64, which records the Cry of the Remnant at the End-time, we find them saying, "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we are all the work of Thy hand." Again, in Jeremiah 18 the same figure is employed. There the prophet is commanded to go down to the potter's house, where he beheld him manufacturing a vessel. The vessel was marred in the hands of the potter, so he "made it again another vessel." Clearly, this is a picture of Israel in the past and in the future. The interpretation is expressly fixed in Jeremiah 18:6: "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel." How clear it is then that "clay" is God's symbol for Israel. In its final form, then, the revived Roman Empire—the kingdom of Antichrist—will be partly Gentilish and partly Jewish. And is not this what we must expect? Will not that be the character of the kingdom of that One which the Antichrist will counterfeit? Such scriptures as Psalm 2:6-8; Isaiah 11:10; 42:6; Revelation 11:15, etc., make plain the dual character of the kingdom over which our Lord will reign during the Millennium. That the Antichrist will be intimately related to both Jews and the Gentiles we have proven again and again in the previous chapters—Revelation 9:11 is quite sufficient to establish the point. Therefore, we should not be surprised to find that that part of the Image which specifically depicts the kingdom over which the Man of Sin shall reign, should be composed of both "iron" and "clay." It would be passing strange were it otherwise. It is indeed striking to note that the "clay" is mentioned in Daniel 2 just nine times—the number of judgment! In Daniel 2:43 we read, "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another even as iron is not mixed with clay"—a verse that has sorely puzzled the expositors. We believe that the reference is to the coming intimacy between Jews and Gentiles. The apostate Jews (members of the Corrupt Woman) shall "mingle themselves with the seed of men"—the Gentiles. This is amplified in Revelation 17, where we read of the great Whore, "with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." "But they shall not cleave one to another"

(Dan. 2:43) is explained in Revelation 17:16—"And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the Beast, these shall hate the Whore, and shall make her desolate and naked," etc.! There is a remarkable verse in Habakkuk 2 which confirms our remarks above, and connects the Antichrist himself with the "clay." The passage begins with the third verse, which, from its quotation in Hebrews 10:37,38 we know, treats of the period immediately preceding our Lord's return. In Habakkuk 2:4 and 5 we have a description of the Antichrist, and then in Habakkuk 2:6 we read, "Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay." The reference is clearly to this "proud Man's" fellowship with apostate Israel. We are satisfied that Habakkuk 2:6-8 is parallel with Isaiah 14:9-12. Isaiah 14 gives us a glimpse of the Antichrist being scoffed at in Hell, by the "chief ones of the earth" because he, too, was unable to escape their awful fate. So in Habakkuk 2, after stating that he "gathereth unto him all nations" (Hab. 2:5) the prophet goes on to say "Shall not all these take up a taunting proverb against him." The taunt is, that though he had leagued himself with the mass of Israel (laden himself with thick clay), yet it will be "the remnant" of this same people that shall "spoil" him (Hab. 2:8). Another scripture which shows that in the End-time apostate Israel will no longer be divided from and hated by the Gentiles is found in Isaiah 2, where we are told, "They strike hands with the children of strangers" (Isa. 2:6 R.V.). As the context here is of such deep interest, and as the whole chapter supplies us with a most vivid picture of the Jews in Palestine just before the Millennium, we shall stop to give it a brief consideration. The first five verses present to us a millennial scene, and then, as is so frequently the case in the prophecies of Isaiah, we are taken back to be shown something of the conditions which shall precede the establishing of the Lord's house in the top of the mountains. This is clear from the twelfth verse, which defines this period, preceding the Millennium as "the Day of the Lord." The section, then, which describes the conditions which are to obtain in Palestine immediately before the Day of the Lord dawns, begins with Isaiah 2:6. We there quote from Isaiah 2:5 to the end of Isaiah 2:10:—"For thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be filled with customs from the east, and are soothsayers like the Palestinians, and they strike hands with the children of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end to their treasures; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is brought low: therefore forgive them not. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of His majesty." This most interesting passage shows us that apostate Israel will be on terms of intimacy with the Gentiles; that she will be the mistress of vast wealth; that she will be given up to idolatry. Their moral condition is described in Isaiah 2:11 to 17—note the repeated references to "lofty looks," "haughtiness of men," "high and lifted up," etc. If Zechariah 5 be read after Isaiah 2:6-9 we have the connecting link between it and Revelation 17. Isaiah 2 shows us the Jews as the owners of fabulous wealth, as being in guilty fellowship with "strangers," and as universally given to idolatry. Zechariah 5 reveals the emigration of apostate Israel (the woman in the midst of the Ephah) and the transference of her wealth to the land of Shinar. Revelation 17 and 18 give the ultimate outcome of this. Here we see apostate Israel in all her corrupt glory. She is pictured, First, as sitting upon many waters (Rev. 17:1), which signified "peoples, and multitudes, and nations and tongues" (Rev. 17:15). These will support her by contributing to her revenues. The huge bond issues made by the nations to obtain loans, are rapidly finding their way into Jewish hands; and doubtless it is the steadily accumulating interest from these which will soon make them the wealthiest nation of the world. That which has half bankrupted Europe will soon be used to array the Woman in purple and scarlet color and gold and precious stones and pearls (Rev. 17:4). Second, the Woman is seen sitting upon the Beast (Rev. 17:3), which means that the Antichrist will use his great

governmental power to insure her protection. How this harmonizes with Daniel 9:27, where we read of him making a seven-year Covenant with them, needs not to be pointed out. Then will poor blinded Israel believe that the Millennium has come. No longer the people of the weary foot and homeless stranger, but mistress of the greatest city in the world. No longer poor and needy, but possessor of the wealth of the earth. No longer the "tail" of the nations, but reigning over them as their financial Creditor and Dictator. No longer despised by the great and mighty, but sought after by the kings of the earth. Nothing withheld that the flesh can desire. The false Prince of Peace their benefactor. Yes, blinded Israel will verily conclude that at long last the millennial era has arrived, and such will be the Devil's imitation of that blessed time which shall be ushered in by the return of God's Son to this earth. But not for long shall this satanic spell be enjoyed. Rudely shall it be broken. For, Third, Revelation 17 shows us the ten horns and the Beast turning against the Whore, stripping her of her wealth, and despoiling her of her glory (Rev. 17:6). This, too, corresponds with Old testament prophecy, for there we read of the Antichrist breaking his Covenant with Israel! As we are told in Psalm 55:20, "He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he has broken his covenant," cf Isaiah 33:8. And this very breaking of the Covenant is but the fulfillment of the Divine counsels. Thousands of years ago, Jehovah addressed Himself through Isaiah to apostate Israel, saying, "And your Covenant with Death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with Hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." Concerning Antichrist's relations with the godly Jewish Remnant, that has already been discussed in previous chapters, as also his final attack upon Jerusalem and his defeat and overthrow in the Valley of Armageddon. Apostate Israel, the Beast, and all his Gentile followers shall be destroyed. The faithful remnant of Israel, and those Gentiles who befriend them in the hour of their need, shall have their part in the millennial kingdom of David's Son and Lord (Matthew 25). Thus has God been pleased to unveil the future and make known to us the things which "must shortly come to pass." May it be ours to reverently search the more sure Word of Prophecy with increasing interest, and may an ever-deepening gratitude fill our hearts and be expressed by our lips, because all who are now saved by grace through faith shall be with our blessed Lord in the Father's House, when the Great Tribulation with all its attendant horrors shall come upon the world.

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