

The Man of Sin

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The sermon discusses the tribulation period and the Man of Sin, a powerful and blasphemous figure who opposes God and exalts himself, revealed after the falling away and during the tribulation period.

Topics: "End Times", "Tribulation Period"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer delves into the detailed descriptions of the period of tribulation as predicted in Scripture, highlighting the great apostasy, the rise of the Man of Sin, and the ultimate culmination of Satanic efforts against God. The tribulation is foretold to precede the day of the Lord and come after the removal of the true Church, leading to the glorious appearing of Christ. The Man of Sin, a world ruler empowered by Satan, is depicted as the epitome of rebellion and blasphemy, deceiving many with signs and wonders. The Scriptures provide a clear timeline of events leading to the establishment of God's everlasting kingdom on earth.

Transcript

Reference has already been made to a period of tribulation yet to come upon the earth. That period is referred to in Scripture by various figures: "The great tribulation," "the time of Jacob's trouble," and "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." It is also described as the culmination of the great apostasy which is predicted for the end of this age and which is emphasized in the later Epistles of the New Testament. These Epistles not only recognize a complete apostasy yet to come in this age, but teach that the beginning of that apostasy was apparent even then at the time when they were written. This teaching of the apostles finds its natural culmination in the last book of the Bible wherein the exact development of the apostasy and the conditions to prevail in the tribulation are recorded at length. All other references, both in the Old and the New Testaments, perfectly agree with this extended description.

In reference to the time of the tribulation which is thus predicted, Paul states in II Thes. 2:3 "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day ('the day of the Lord') shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of Sin be revealed, the son of perdition," thus showing that the tribulation precedes the day of the Lord; and in Rev. 19 that day is seen to be the termination of the tribulation, which is previously described in that book. This period of tribulation is, therefore, to come before the Kingdom Age, and to be ended by the glorious appearing of Christ, the King.

Again, the tribulation is to come after the true Church has been removed; for it should be remembered that the true believers are to be saved out of the "hour of trial which shall come upon the earth to try those that

dwell therein" (Rev. 3:10), (the believer, being a citizen of the heavenlies is, therefore, not included among those who dwell in the earth). This aspect of the Lord's return is often misunderstood. He comes first, not to the earth, but into the air to meet His Bride and gather her to Himself; both those that are sleeping and those that are awake: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thes. 4:16, 17). This phase of his coming is, and has been, imminent since the promises of his return were given; and it is for this particular preliminary event that the Church is taught to hope and pray, for it will be the time of her rapture and blessedness. As has been before stated, the utter dissolution of humanity is latent in the unregenerated heart (Rom. 3:10-18), and its own tribulation only awaits this removal of all Divine restraint. It is, therefore, both Scriptural and reasonable to conclude that tribulation will instantly begin upon the earth after the first aspect of the return of Christ when He comes for His Church.

Thus it may be seen that this period of unsurpassed trial upon the earth, when the blasphemous claims of Satan and man are to be proven and God's testimony is to be vindicated, is bounded by the two events in the Second Coming of Christ: when He comes for His saints (I Thes. 4:16, 17), to gather to Himself His heavenly people, and when He comes with His saints (Rev. 19:11-21) to be the complete fulfillment of all the covenants of God with His earthly people.

The actual duration of this period is marked off in Daniel 9:24-27: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after the three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 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."

There are three distinct periods of time here indicated. First: Seventy weeks between the time of the vision, and the age of "everlasting righteousness" and anointing of the most Holy; or, from the time of the vision, to the earthly kingdom of Christ, which is yet future. Second: Sixty-nine weeks; beginning to reckon from the same time, or from the command of the King of Babylon to restore Jerusalem, and continuing unto the death of Christ, which is referred to as the "cutting off of the Messiah." And lastly: One week, for the overspreading of abomination and that which is determined to be poured upon the desolate.

History fortunately interprets the time here indicated: for, from the command of the King to rebuild Jerusalem, to the death of Christ was 483 years, or sixty-nine weeks of seven years each. This leaves but the one additional week of the seventy before the bringing in of the everlasting righteousness. That one week is here described as the time of most terrible desolation and overspreading of abomination, when the people are under a covenant with another prince. This present age is as a parenthesis in Jewish history and, as no account is made of it in these reckonings, the last unfulfilled week (seven years) of the seventy, before the kingdom is established upon the earth, must be the time between the gathering out of

the Church--an event which completes the purpose of this parenthetical age--and the final bringing in of the kingdom.

The last period of seven years of desolation is, however, to be shortened, according to the words of Christ: "For then shall be 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: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:21, 22). It should be noticed that this period cannot be confused easily with any other, for it is referred to as the time more terrible than any other that has ever been, or ever will be (Dan. 12:1; Joel 2:2; Matt. 24:21, 22).

Reference has been made at length to the tribulation period in order to make clear the exact conditions in which the Man of Sin is to appear; for this mighty world-ruler makes his advent in those days of earth's darkness and gloom when all the light of God has been withdrawn, and the world is left in its own helpless confusion. He appears in the tribulation as the agent of Satan after that mighty head of the Satanic system has been cast out of heaven into the earth (Rev. 12:7-12). The time of the destruction of the Man of Sin is also revealed in that it is mentioned as one of the events in the glorious coming of Christ (Dan. 2:44; 7:11-14; II Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:20). He, therefore, appears as the culmination of the Satanic effort, and a careful study of his person and character will reveal the fact that he is the most stupendous work of Satan in his enmity against God.

In connection with the time of the Man of Sin, it is also to be noted that the believer is not directly warned against his person, but is, rather, warned against the conditions that are to prevail as a preparation for his coming. This is due to the fact that the true believers are to be gathered to their Lord before that "Wicked one" appears, and they are, therefore, only in danger of being influenced by that which precedes and prepares for his coming. His description is set forth at length only in such passages as deal with the whole and final development of the age.

It should also be remembered that the description of this person, like that of the person and work of Satan, is from the standpoint of the holiness of God; and that which the world will hail as its glorious ideal of perfection is, in God's sight, the personification of rebelliousness, blasphemy, and treason.

The order of the governments and rulers of the world in this Gentile age is revealed to Daniel in visions which are recorded and interpreted in the book of Daniel. In these visions the Man of Sin appears as the "little horn" of Dan. 7 and is the last and most God-dishonoring world-ruler. He also later appears as the "desolator" of Dan. 9:27; the "willful King" of Dan. 11:36; the "abomination of desolation" of Matt. 24:15; the "Man of Sin" of II Thes. 2:4-8; the rider on the white horse of Rev. 6:2; and the first Beast of Rev. 13. His identity is certain, even though he appears under various figures and titles; for he, like Satan, is so unique in his character, time, and undertakings, that he cannot be confused easily with any other.

In Daniel 2 the order of the kingdoms is set forth by the figure of the great image which, at the last, is suddenly and violently shattered by the "stone cut from the mountain without hands": which Stone is Christ, the Corner Stone; and the Stone which the builders rejected. The feet and toes of this image are said to be the last manifestation of human government, and it is this part of the image that is violently shattered by the Stone. Of this termination of earthly rule it is recorded in Dan. 2:44, 45: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. For as much as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without

hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the King what shall come to pass hereafter; and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

From this chapter it may be seen that the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom is to be both sudden and destructive to all human governments, and that it is in no way the result of an age of development and progressive improvement.

In Dan. 7 the Man of Sin appears, as has been stated, as the "little horn" among ten horns; which, like the ten toes of the great image, indicate the extreme end of human authority and power. In this vision the latter end of the kingdoms of the earth is seen to culminate in the one most daring ruler, the "little horn", who has "a mouth speaking great things" and whose look is more imposing than all others; and he it is who makes war with the saints and prevails over them until the coming of the Ancient of days. The inspired interpretation of the vision is given in Dan. 7:23-27: "Thus he said, the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into His hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominion shall serve and obey Him."

In Dan. 11 the reign of the Man of Sin, the willful king, is prophesied in detail; and the fact is stated that the reign and the blasphemous attitude of this last great ruler are both in the purpose of God. A portion of this remarkable passage is here given: "And 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, and shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain." This last verse is more clearly translated "and he will practice in the strongholds of fortresses with a strange god; whoso acknowledgeth him will be increased with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over the many, and shall divide the land to them for a reward" (Dan. 11:36-39).

Beside the colossal disregard for God, this passage presents several important revelations. First: The expression "the God of his fathers" would seem to indicate that the Man of Sin would come from a lineage of Christians. Second: His disregard for the desire of women is evidence of his hatred of the true Messiah; for this reference is probably to the desire of every Jewish woman to be the mother of Messiah. Third: Those who acknowledge the strange god, (Satan), whom he honors, will be prospered, and the land will be divided unto them and he will give them authority and glory.

In the New Testament the Man of Sin is described as "the one who comes in his own name," whom men will receive (Jno. 5:43); "that man of sin," "the son of perdition" (II Thes. 2:3); "that Wicked one" (II Thes.

2:8); and the "beast" (Rev. 13:1), and to him Satan gives all the power and glory he offered to Christ (Lu. 4:5, 6). Of the many references to him, two passages deal with him at length. In the first (II Thes. 2:1-10), his coming is mentioned as directly following the removal of God's present restraint from the earth; and in the second (Rev. 13:1-8), as has been shown, his coming is said to directly follow the casting of Satan from heaven into the earth (Rev. 12:7-12), and continues until the glorious appearing of Christ, which is described in Rev. 19 and 20.

The former passage (II Thes. 2:1-10) is as follows: "Now, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin 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. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And, now, ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth (restrains) will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

In this passage it is predicted of this mighty person that he will assume to be very God, "sitting in the temple as God," and winning the worship of the multitude by his miraculous power, signs, and lying wonders; deceiving all who perish, and who would not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved.

Still another and more striking description of this person is given in the second passage just mentioned (Rev. 13:1-8): "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and 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. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon (Satan) gave him his power, and his seat, and his great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon (Satan) which gave power unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: 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."

The first, and, it would seem, most important thing that is stated of this being in this Scripture is that one of his heads was, as it were, wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed. Some have claimed this to be a reference to a previous political defeat followed by reinstatement to power. The expression is, however, most suggestive and significant as an attempt on the part of Satan to imitate, in the Man of Sin, that which was the supreme miracle of the Christ--His death and resurrection. The effort is plainly effective; more so than a mere shifting of political fortune could possibly be; for the statement follows: "All

the world wondered after the beast who had received the deadly wound and yet lived." After they wondered, they worshipped. First they worshipped Satan, who performed the mighty miracle; and then they worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?" The terrible blasphemy of the Man of Sin has been emphasized in all Scripture references to him, and is here still more vividly pictured.

The time he is to continue is said to be forty and two months, which would be one-half the tribulation period; and this statement is probably not at all figurative. By his overwhelming supernatural power and wisdom he gains authority over every living thing in the Satanic system, excepting those recorded in the Lamb's book of life. These are not brought under his governing power.

The latter part of the chapter presents still another mighty person, who is also called a "beast," but later appears as the false prophet (Rev. 19:20); and who exercises all the power of the first beast, and receives his power from the dragon, Satan. Much is said of this second "beast," but his mission is in no way to attract attention to himself. He co-operates in gaining world-wide worship and authority for the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. The second beast seems to deal directly with the people and by his mighty signs and miracles, as well as by his authority, he compels loyalty to the first beast. Fire is called down from heaven; and a dumb idol is made to speak and live. He is able to establish a union of all people in trade, imposing a death penalty upon them. And by all these means he furthers the interests of the first beast. The Scripture here referred to is as follows: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon (Satan). And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred three score and six" (Rev. 13:11-18).

There is a deep suggestion, in the person of this second beast, of a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit of God. He who came not to speak of Himself, but to glorify Christ and to unite all believers; leading them in worship and praise. This second beast is probably identical with "Anti-christ," who appears under that title only in the writings of John, and who is there seen as the consummation of a long succession of false religious teachers who have denied the Christ and His sacrificial work.

When the testimony of all Scripture upon the Man of Sin is considered, he is seen to be a person whose superhuman power is plainly ascribed to Satan. He appears upon the scene, after the removal of the heavenly people and during the great tribulation, as the climax of all Satanic exaltation and opposition to God. He is the last and greatest of earthly rulers, and, from his position of unsurpassed influence, speaks great words and manifests great wisdom. He is externally religious, and the promoter of great righteous projects and principles which in God's sight are only hypocrisy and blasphemy because of the subtle Christ-denying motive which prompts it all. His hold upon the public mind is by a process which is natural. Great miracles are performed by himself and by his prophet,--fire is called down from heaven; a dumb idol

is made to speak and live; and he himself has been wounded to death and yet lives. By such supernatural works his assumption to be very God is accepted, and he becomes the world's ideal of all that is supreme. The people are said to first marvel and wonder; then to worship at his feet; and at last, in mad devotion, they challenge the universe to produce his equal--"Who is like the beast?" they cry. He has been wounded to death and yet lives; he performs as great miracles as the world has ever seen; his teachings are based upon Scripture; and he must, therefore, be God manifest in the flesh. His wisdom, beauty and majesty are a seeming warrant for every element of adoration.

Thus the Man of Sin will appear as the culmination of all the counterfeit methods of Satan; which method had its beginnings in the last days of the age, even before the calling away of the true Church, the Body of Christ. The subtle doctrines of devils will be adopted as creeds in assemblies and so called churches, and these deep things, with the Satanic ambition for moral improvement, will be voiced by ordained ministers who appear as apostles of Christ and ministers of righteousness. Yet in God's sight it is all a deep lie and hypocrisy, for they are distorting His truth and subtly denying His redemption.

All this, as has been stated, is but the Satanic preparation of humanity that they may wholly acknowledge him as their god, and that he may himself become like the Most High. This program is permitted in the purpose of God, for "that that is determined shall be done" (Dan. II:36). It will be only for a moment; for the resistless coming of the "Ancient of Days" will unveil all this deception, banish the enemies, and bring in His own long-predicted and glorious reign of everlasting blessedness upon the earth.

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