

The Mystery of Iniquity

by Reggie Kelly

The mystery of iniquity refers to the revelation of the Antichrist, who is the embodiment of Satan's power and nature on earth, and marks the transition point in heaven that allows for the revelation of the mystery of God and the coming of the kingdom.

Scripture: Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 28:15, Daniel 8:25, Daniel 9:25, John 3:34, Colossians 1:19, 2 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Timothy 3:16, Revelation 10:7, Revelation 11:7

Topics: "Satan And Sin", "Good Vs Evil"

Description

Reggie Kelly delves into the profound mysteries of Genesis 3:15, connecting it to the comprehensive plan of God revealed in the Bible, particularly focusing on the two seeds representing the lines of men leading to redemption. He explores the nature of Satan in fallen man versus the nature of God in His saints, culminating in the personal incarnations of the two princes in Daniel. Reggie discusses the revelation of the Man of Sin and the Antichrist, emphasizing the intricate events leading to their manifestation and the ultimate battle between good and evil.

Transcript

ardly enough could be said about Gen 3:15. It is the seed bed, not only of the gospel but of the whole comprehensive mystery of God that is finished with the 7th trumpet (Rev 10:7). The two seeds establish the two lines of men by which the plan of redemption can be traced from beginning to end. It is more than Messiah and Satan. It anticipates the line of the ungodly making up the city of man, mystery Babylon, and the line of the children of the Spirit who are headed up in the Messiah who form corporately the city of God, the heavenly Zion.

These two lines are really two natures, the nature of Satan in fallen man and the nature of God in His saints. These two natures that run through the whole of humanity come to their fullness and perfection in a personal incarnation in the two princes of Dan 9:25-26. Paul will speak of the "mystery of godliness" (1Tim 3:16) and its antithesis, the "mystery of iniquity" (2Thes 2:7). The mystery of iniquity that is presently working, comes to final revelation in the 'man of sin' after the one who is restraining is removed.

As Jesus would be the ultimate Seed of the woman who perfects in His humanity the mystery of godliness, so also the seed of the serpent must come to a similar fullness of Satan in the flesh. As the uniquely begotten Son was given the Spirit without the measure (Jn 3:34) so that in Him should dwell all the fullness of God (Col 1:19; 2:9), just so, by a miraculous transition, the Antichrist will likewise fill up the full

measure and image of his father, the Devil. Thus, the two princes of Dan 9:25-26 fulfill two distinct mysteries that bound the age between the 69th and 70th weeks of Daniel.

We must understand that the "revelation" of the Man of Sin implies something much more than merely identifying him by his actions, as usually understood. Scripture reveals a number of recognizable events that lead up to his abominable act in the temple that will identify him well before his 'revelation' as the Man of Sin (Isa 28:15, 18; Dan 8:25; 9:27; 11:21-31). The 'revelation' of the Man of Sin signifies that transitional moment that Satan fully enters the mortally wounded beast as he ascends from the abyss to become the "beast that was, and is not, and yet is" (Rev 11:7; 17:8).

The mystery that I believe the Spirit intends to convey is that the same beast that descends into the abyss upon the event of the mortal wound, ascends to become 'the beast that was, and is not, and yet is' (Rev 11:7; 13:14; 17:8, 11). Upon his ascent from the abyss, he becomes the composite beast who now embodies the fullness of that spirit / nature of Satan that was only partially seen in the former beast kingdoms (Rev 13:2; 17:11). This mystery is that all of this is now concentrated in a man (Rev 13:18), as now endowed with "all power and signs and lying wonder" (2Thes 2:9).

In what follows, I want to show that the one who begins as a 'despicable' person (in God's eyes), and who comes in disarmingly to obtain the kingdom, not by war or by ordinary means of succession, but by deceit and blandishment (Dan 8:25; 11:21, 23), is the same leader (scripture calls him a king) who will rise from the dead. This supreme demonic miracle (ordained by God as necessary before Christ can return) will move the whole of the unsaved world to marvel as they "behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" (Rev 13:3; 17:8).

The miraculous healing of the head wound is further described as an ascent up out of the abyss (Rev 11:7; 17:8). Obviously, the mortal wound is the descent; its healing is the ascent. I believe this is the strong delusion that God has determined to send on those who have already manifested a determined and resolute hatred for the truth (2Thes 2:11). It will mean irreversible reprobation (Rev 14:9-11), the point of no return.

A comparison of Dan 12:1 with Rev 12:7-14 makes clear that the unequalled tribulation starts when Michael stands to cast Satan down to earth. Plainly, the eviction of Satan intersects in time with the ascent of the Antichrist from the abyss with the healing of the mortal wound (Rev 13:3, 12; 17:10). At the same time, or nearly the same time, the abomination is being placed in Jerusalem to begin the tribulation (Dan 9:27; 12:11; Mt 24:15-16, 21; 2Thes 2:4; Rev 11:2).

Whether this demonic resurrection takes place very shortly before his invasion of Israel, or shortly upon his forcible arrival in the city is an open question. It has been reasonably suggested that this miracle of resurrection is how he is able to secure the unified cooperation of the ten kings in the 'secretly planned' assault on Jerusalem that finds Israel off guard, dwelling securely under the false presumption of lasting peace (Isa 28:15, 18; Eze 38:8-9; Dan 8:25; 11:23, 27-31 with 1Thes 5:3).

Notice the relation between Satan's expulsion and the coming of the kingdom in Rev 12:10. Why is it that the kingdom does not come in all its fullness until Satan is cast down? I believe it is for the same reason that the day of the Lord cannot come until the one who is restraining is taken out of the way. The removal of Satan as the one who hinders (1Thes 2:18) permits the mystery of iniquity to be revealed in the man of sin as the personal embodiment of the beast that returns from the mortal wound. This alone explains why all of heaven rejoices with such great jubilation over an event that will mean such woe and suffering for the

earth (Rev 12:10-12).

When scripture is carefully compared, it becomes apparent that this will be realized through a miracle of death and resurrection that will cause the entire unsaved world to "wonder when they behold the beast who was, and is not, and yet is" (Rev 13:3: 17:8). Nothing else is so well calculated to so powerfully deceive the multitudes. It is a divine judgment for those who have not received the love of the truth, particularly in the face of such abundant evidence from prophecy that we know will be declared under great anointing at that time (2Thes 2:11; Rev 13:3-4, 14 with Mt 24:14; Rev 12:10; Dan 11:33; 11:2; Isa 28:11-12).

Many interpret the healing of the wound as the resurrection of one of the kingdoms of antiquity, such as Rome or the Ottoman Empire. It is hard to see how something as gradual and naturally explained as the revival of a former world kingdom could so well account for the kind of deception that such an astonishing miracle will send upon the world of the unsaved. Furthermore, the revival of a former kingdom would hardly require the casting down of Satan, whereas Satan is very committed to resist a forced entrance into the body of Antichrist, since the revelation of the mystery of iniquity will mean that is time is short (2Thes 2:3, 7-8; Rev 12:12).

This explains why the mortal wound in one of the beast's heads so nearly appropriates the language of Gen 3:15. As much as Satan was fatally wounded at the cross, the death of the Antichrist (by the mortal wound) is significantly timed in relation to Michael's enforcement in heaven of the victory of calvary. For this cause, the death of the Antichrist means the end of Satan's tenure over the nations, because his resurrection will mean the soon end of the composite beast (Dan 7:11; 2Thes 2:8) through which Satan has ruled over the nations as the god of this age.

All the evidence points in the direction that the desecration of the temple at Jerusalem is in close connection with the casting down of Satan, which results in the resurrection of the Antichrist. It must not be missed that Satan's casting down is in close, I would say immediate, connection to the healing of the mortal wound, which the best reading of the evidence shows to be the actual resurrection of the man of sin.

Whereas it is true that the beast who speaks great words, persecutes the saints, and kills the two witness at the end of the 3 1/2 years (Rev 11:2-3; 13:5), is represented as a man (Dan 7:8; 11:21, 36-37; 2Thes 2:4; Rev 13:18), he is much more. He belongs to a multi-headed, multi-horned composite beast (Rev 13:2; 17:10-11) that reaches back across all the great, God opposing kingdoms of the biblical record. Clearly, Rome is the 6th head of this beast, as contemporary to the apostle John who received the Revelation in the first century A.D. (Rev 17:9-10). From John's place in time, only one more head remains, and it will continue only a 'short space' (Rev 17:10). How then does the Spirit speak of an 8th?

The riddle is solved when we understand that the 8th head that goes into perdition is the risen 7th who "was, and is not, and yet is" (Rev 17:8, 10). In this way, the 7th and last head continues a 'short space' as the 8th, since the 8th is manifestly the return of the 7th. After continuing the 'short space' (the 42 months), the 8th beast, as the risen 7th, goes into perdition. Notice that the beast is cast into the lake of fire one thousand years before 'the rest of the dead' (Rev 20:5) or even Satan (Rev 20:10-15).

As the eighth, he incorporates in a single individual all the power of evil that has been behind the great world kingdoms of the gentiles that have usurped and resisted the promised rule of God over all the earth. As Satan manifest in the flesh, the risen man of sin becomes the ultimate embodiment of that composite,

trans-historical beast, that has been the instrument through which Satan has exercised his rule over the nations until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled.

As much as Michael's casting down of Satan marks the great transition point in heaven that has its counterpart in the abomination of desolation on earth to begin the tribulation (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:1, 11 with Mt 24:15, 21; Rev 12:7-14). And as much as we believe that Satan's expulsion intersects with the healing of the deadly wound, we have before us compelling evidence that the temple of God at Jerusalem is entered by a man who has only very recently risen from the dead.

The revelation of the long working mystery of iniquity means that the man of sin now incorporates in himself all the fullness of what the former beasts were only in part, just as Jesus filled up in His holy person all the fullness of God. This is how the 'prince that shall come' fulfills the mystery of iniquity as the incarnation of the serpent's seed, which is necessary before Jesus can return (2Thes 2:3, 7-8). Thus the revelation of the Man of Sin is not merely the point at which he can be identified, but much more particularly the moment that Satan becomes fully incarnated in the revived "beast that was, and is not, and yet is" (Rev 17:8).

Significantly, the time of Satan's ultimate exposure in the Antichrist, with the casting down of the accuser of the brethren, is also the time that the two witnesses receive power, and not only the two witnesses, but we notice from a number of passages that this is also the same time that a great anointing is shown to rest on the maskilim (the wise who have understanding; Dan 11:32-33; 12:3, 10 with Rev 11:3, 12:10-11). It is amazing to contemplate that the most manifest and abundant fulfillment of prophecy since Messiah's first advent will accompany the greatest empowerment of the church since Pentecost. This will result in the evangelization of a multitude too great to number that will come out of 'the tribulation, the great one' (Dan 11:32-33; 12:3 with Rev 7:9, 14).

So the great transition that takes place in heaven affects much more than the revelation of the Man of Sin. The casting down of the accuser will also accomplish an unparalleled release of the Spirit and power upon the godly remnant. The first half of the week will have been crucially instrumental in crowding the godly remnant to the kind of intercession that will receive the intervention of Michael who will accomplish the final removal of Satan from his position in heaven as the one who hinders the revelation of the mystery of iniquity and by so much, the coming of the kingdom (compare 2Thes 2:7 with Rev 10:7; 11:15; 12:10). Notably, Michael's removal of Satan as an obstruction to the full coming in of the kingdom (Rev 12:10) is very much to be compared to the removal of the opposing prince of Persia who stood to resist the mighty revelation that was fighting to break through in answer to Daniel's prayer (Dan 10:10:12-14).

[Note: Besides 'the accuser of the brethren' (Job 2:4; Zech 3:1-2; Rev 12:10), Satan is also called the one who hinders, withstands, or resists (Dan 10:13; Zech 3:1; Ro 1:13 with 1Thes 2:18; 2Thes 2:7).]

As you know, it is my view that Satan is the restrainer whose position in heaven is holding back the revelation of the mystery of iniquity, which is holding back the day of the Lord (2Thes 2:2-3, 7-8). So long as his place in heaven can be retained, the day of the Lord cannot come, the kingdom cannot come (Rev 12:10; 11:15), and the mystery of God cannot be finished (Rev 10:7). This is why Satan is in no hurry to bring forth the Antichrist, as popularly supposed.

This is where we have it turned just around. We naturally tend to think it is Satan's great ambition to bring forth the Antichrist. But this is the last thing he wants, since his full exposure in the Man of Sin will mean that from that time, his time is short (Rev 12:12). His power over the nations is at an end. (This is why he

goes after the woman with an urgent and desperate fury. He knows that the preservation of a remnant from among the Jewish race is indispensable to the public vindication of God's irrevocable covenant with them; Isa 59:21; Ro 11:27.)

Satan's eviction by Michael in the middle of the week is very much to be compared to the resistance of the demon prince of Persia who "withstood" the angelic messenger until he was taken out of the way by Michael (Dan 10:13). Doubtless, this is the background of Paul's thought on the much disputed question of the identity of the restrainer. It is also strongly confirmed by John's depiction of Michael's forceful removal of Satan as a prior necessity before the kingdom of God can fully come on earth with the finishing of the mystery of God (Rev 10:7; 11:15; 12:10).

Notice how the same event that signals great woe to the earth dwellers (Rev 12:12) marks a mighty break-through of heavenly glory and victory for the saints (Rev 12:10-11). "'Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.'" Why? Because the accuser of our brethren is cast down ..." (Rev 12:10). Daniel then becomes a type of the 'maskilim' (wise / understanding) of the last days (Dan 11:32-33; 12:3, 10) when a pre-determined sequence of foretold events will move the godly remnant to a place of ultimate urgency and intercessory travail that will be answered in Michael's intervention.

It is clearly NOT the false prophet, but John's sea beast who rises from the abyss with the healing of the mortal wound (Rev 11:7; 13:1-3; 17:8). It is he who reveals the mystery of iniquity as the incarnation of the serpent's seed. It is important to see that this trans-historical (Rev 17:10), multi-headed, multi-horned beast is ultimately embodied in a man, I believe a resurrected man, the man of sin. So which prince takes away the daily sacrifice? That is the question that will decide whether we can say that the 'coming prince' of Dan 9:26 is the man of sin, and not some other, such as Antiochus IV, as suggested by Jewish scholars, or Titus, as suggested by most Christian scholars of replacement orientation? The answer to this question will decide whether the 70th week of Daniel followed the 69th in unbroken succession, or whether we must see a gap between the death of Christ and the advent and career of Antichrist.

Those who want to make Jesus the one who confirms the covenant in Dan 9:27 argue that is not the 'prince that shall come' but Messiah, the anointed prince who is cut off (Dan 9:26), who stops the sacrifice by His death in the middle of the week. There are a number of problems with this view, not least is the observation that in every other mention throughout the book of Daniel, it is always the evil prince that stops the regular sacrifice (Dan 8:11; 11:31; 12:11). Moreover, the desolation of Jerusalem described in Dan 11:31; 12:11 comes approximately 3 1/2 years before the end in Dan 12:11, and this is consistent with the sacrifice being stopped in the middle of the week. It is particularly inconsistent to make the 'consummation' / 'end' described in Dan 9:27 to be merely the end of the city in 70 A.D., whereas in every other mention, 'the end' has in view the post-tribulational deliverance of Daniel's people and the resurrection of the dead (Dan 12:1-2, 13; Mt 24:21, 29-31; Rev 12:7-14).

In summary, if the final week of years has in view the Antichrist as "the prince that shall come", then we must infer a gap between Messiah's atoning death at the end of the 69th week and His return to destroy the Antichrist at the end of the 70th week. As the first 69 weeks brings us to the revelation of the gospel with the cutting off of the anointed prince (Dan 9:26), the 70th is preserved to bring in His return after the mystery of iniquity has been revealed in the 'prince that shall come'. Therefore, it is no more possible for the 69th week to have followed the 70th week in unbroken succession than for the advent and career of Antichrist to have followed immediately upon the death of Jesus. To infer a gap between these two

antithetical mysteries of incarnation is in perfect keeping with 'mystery of the gospel', which reveals a heretofore hidden age between the two advents of Christ. This is the mystery that so profoundly tested Israel, over which all but the elect would stumble.

Curiously, Daniel never uses the term, 'day of the Lord', but the unequalled tribulation and the "finishing of the transgression" (Dan 8:24; 9:24) is clearly the last stage in Israel's long history of covenant discipline that ends in the day of the Lord. The age long discipline of the covenant foretold by Moses in Lev 26, Deut 28; 31-32, continues till the new heart is given at a time of "great tribulation" (Deut 4:29-30; 29:4; 30:1-6). The discipline of the covenant does not end with a probationary return to the Land. We see this in the fact that the return from Babylon still looks ahead to a future unequalled tribulation climaxing in the day of the Lord (Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1; Zech 14:1; Mal 4:1). Israel is not assured of secure preservation in the Land until the "bringing in of the "everlasting righteousness" of the "everlasting covenant" (Jer 34:40; Dan 9:24). This righteousness is 'revealed' in the gospel (Ro 1:17).

Daniel knew the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others who spoke of this righteousness that must come before the nation could be established in abiding security in their Land. Jeremiah had shown that in that day when Israel would dwell safely, the righteous Branch, Israel's King, would be called, "the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer 23:5-6). I believe it is incorrect to suppose that this everlasting righteousness is only brought in at the end of the 70th week. Like "reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan 9:24), the everlasting righteousness came in for the church at the end of the 69th week. It will yet come in for 'all Israel' at the end of the tribulation, which, of course, is also the end of the 70th week.

This conforms perfectly to what was foretold by Isaiah in Isa 8:14-17. The teaching would be "bound up and sealed among my disciples" until God's face is no longer hidden from the house of Jacob. Note that the face of God remains hidden from Jacob until the Spirit is poured out at the great day of the Lord (Eze 39:22, 29; Zech 12:10; Joel 2:28-29; 3:1-2, 16-17, 21). While the greater part of Israel would stumble, the mystery of the kingdom and the gospel (the sealed vision) would be revealed to the believing disciples, who await its revelation to the surviving remnant of Israel at the post-tribulational day of the Lord. It is that unveiling that births the nation 'at once' and 'in one day' at the end of a final time of national travail and great affliction (Deut 4:29-30; Isa 13:6-8; 26:17-18; 66:8; Mic 5:3; Hos 5:15; Jer 30:6-7; with Eze 39:22; Zech 3:9; 12:10; Mt 23:39; 24:30; Acts 3:21; Ro 11:26; Rev 1:7). The redemption of Israel is inextricably bound to the hope of resurrection (Ro 11:15), as all roads lead to that great transition called, day of the Lord, which the NT treats as a synonym for Christ's return.

We see in Rev 12 that the seed of the woman is both corporate and personal. It is therefore a great error to limit the woman's travail to Mary, or the man child only to Jesus. The figure of the woman and the man child is far more sweeping, envisioning, not only the personal Seed, but the corporate seed of the woman which includes not only the spiritual seed, but also the physical seed through whom alone the promise of the everlasting covenant can be fulfilled in an all holy Jewish nation as the theocratic head of the nations.

The end of the covenant that will realize the return of the natural branches (Ro 11:27) envisions the glorious convergence of the earthly and heavenly Zion at Christ's return. The woman is an inclusive figure that includes the elect nation, I would say, even in its unbelief as the abiding object of an irrevocable election, and also the believing 'remnant of her seed who keep the commandments of Jesus'. Thus, the woman represents both Israel and the church, as the righteous remnant within the still elect nation.

Now notice a great mystery: Isa 66:7-8 shows the astonishing anomaly of the birth of a man child BEFORE the woman travails. Then, only AFTER Zion's travail, the nation is born in one day.

"Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children."

This is the riddle that Rev 12 will solve. If we understand the woman to represent both the heavenly and the earthly Zion, we see that it is the heavenly Zion that brings forth the man child BEFORE the great tribulation. This stands in marked contrast to the earthly Zion whom Satan tries to exterminate before the covenant can be fulfilled in their return (Isa 59:21; Ro 11:27). Hence, there is one travail of the woman before the tribulation, and there is another travail of the woman that 'IS' the tribulation. It is only "when Zion travails" that a nation is born in one day (Isa 66:8). This is in marked contrast to the 'pre-tribulation' travail that births the man child BEFORE the pain of Israel comes in what is clearly the great tribulation (Isa 66:7 with Rev 12:1, 5-6). Obviously, the birth of the nation in one day refers to the post-tribulation day of the Lord, not May 14, 1948, as popularly taught.

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