



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Lesson 14.3 – The Doctrine of the Antichrist

The Characteristics of the Antichrist

When we examine all these clear references in Scripture to the Antichrist, we come to the following conclusions: The Antichrist will emerge out of the Roman Empire and will exercise a portion of the power of the Roman Empire (three of the ten horns). The Antichrist will be characterized by a mouth speaking pompous words against God, by a persecution of God's faithful people, by a seeming victory over them, by attempting to change God's laws, and by continuing in power until Judgment Day. All of this was foretold by God through His prophet Daniel.

The apostle Paul expanded on Daniel's prophecies of the Antichrist in chapter two of his letter to the Thessalonians. He explained that the man of sin or the Antichrist would be revealed before the second coming of Christ. Moreover, the coming of the Antichrist would be preceded by a falling away or an apostasy from the faith. These are his words: **"That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition"** (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Then Paul describes the two chief characteristics of the Antichrist by which he can be recognized: He **"opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God"** (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Daniel already said that the Antichrist would speak words against God; he will oppose God. Thus, he is Antichrist, against Christ. Paul then goes on to show that the Antichrist will exalt himself above everything else. In fact, he will even present himself as though he himself were God. He will do this in the very temple of God. The Old Testament Antichrist, Antiochus IV, did indeed exalt himself in the temple of God at Jerusalem. But the Antichrist foretold by the apostle Paul could not sit in the temple of God at Jerusalem. That temple was destroyed in 70 AD and has not been rebuilt. In the New Testament God's people are called the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). That the Antichrist is sitting in the temple of God means that the Antichrist will appear among God's people; he will be a religious leader, holding his power among Christians. Thus, he will be both against Christ and instead of Christ. He will be trying to take the place of Christ among Christians right in the temple of God, Christ's Church.

Paul continues his description by telling us that the force or the spirit of Antichrist was already at work in his own time, but that someone or something was restraining him. When that force would be taken out of the way, then the Antichrist would become more evident. These are Paul's words: **"And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed"** (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8).

This restraining force is not explained any further. But if we remember Daniel's prophecy that the Antichrist will emerge from the fourth empire, the Roman Empire, and take away a portion of authority from the Roman Empire, it seems likely that the restraining force is the Roman Empire, or the Roman emperor himself. As long as the Roman emperor had all ten horns, he would not allow any other authority to emerge. But when his authority is lost in part, then this other power, the Antichrist, would emerge, having the power of three of his ten horns.

Paul's description of the Antichrist continues: **"And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming"** (2

Thessalonians 2:8). The Antichrist will remain hidden for some time, but then he will be revealed. Remember, the Antichrist will use words, pompous words, boastful words. Thus, the only way he can be opposed and defeated is by more powerful words, namely, the words that come from God's mouth: the true Word of God. And the Antichrist will continue to hold power until he is finally destroyed at the return of our Lord on Judgment Day. This agrees with Daniel's prophecy that the Antichrist's dominion would be taken away when **"the court shall be seated"** (Daniel 7:26).

Paul's description of the Antichrist continues: **"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"** (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

In these words we are told why the Lord permits the Antichrist to arise and deceive so many people. God gave His people the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We know this from the book of Acts, which describes the spread of the Gospel in the Roman Empire through the work of Paul and the other apostles. But after a time, this Gospel truth was no longer treasured among those who heard it. Therefore, after a time God permitted them to accept the lies of the Antichrist, so that the people were deluded by these lies. Satan is the great liar from the beginning, and the Antichrist is the tool of Satan, who works through the Antichrist **"with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish."**

To these descriptions of the Antichrist given us by Daniel and Paul we can add the comments of the apostle John in his first two letters. John says there will be many false teachers among God's people; they are all antichrists. In John's own time there were those who were denying that the Christ or Messiah had come in the flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. But John also foretold the coming of the Antichrist, who would also deny the Father by denying the Son. John also said that the spirit of the Antichrist was **"now already in the world"** (1 John 4:3) during his time.

In the revelations that Jesus gave to John when he was on exile on the island of Patmos there are many allusions to antichristian forces of various kinds, particularly in Revelation 13, where we hear of someone **"given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies"** (Revelation 13:5). Also **"it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them"** (Revelation 13:7). We are also told of one who **"deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do"** (Revelation 13:14).

Just as God in the Old Testament times described the coming Christ through His prophets and expected that when He came, His people would recognize Him, so also God has described the coming Antichrist, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, so that when he came we would be able to recognize him. His characteristics have been revealed to us for that very purpose, so that we might not be among the many who will be deceived by Satan through him.

Questions

1. How did the prophet Daniel characterize the coming Antichrist?
2. What would precede the coming of the Antichrist?
3. What are the two chief characteristics of the Antichrist?
4. What is meant by the temple of God in 2 Thessalonians 2:4?
5. What is most likely the restraining power Paul mentions?
6. What is the only way to fight against the words of the Antichrist?
7. When will the Antichrist finally be destroyed?
8. How did the apostle John characterize the Antichrist?