

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

* * * SATAN'S PREPARATIONS TO UNLEASH THE ANTICHRIST * * *

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Soli Deo Gloria!

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way."
(2 Thessalonians 2:7)

The Antichrist and the Unholy Trinity. The future leader of Daniel's fourth Gentile kingdom (Dan3:40-43) who will rise to global prominence/power during the 70th Week of Daniel (Dan9:27) is known by many names in Scripture, including: the "little horn" (Dan7:8), the "prince that shall come" (Dan9:26), the "[willful] king" (Dan11:36), the "idol shepherd" (Zech11:17), the "man of sin" and the "son of perdition" (2Thess2:3), and the "beast" (Rev13:1); but today he is most commonly called the "antichrist" (1Jn2:18). During the coming 7-year Tribulation period a counterfeit (Unholy) Trinity will emerge on the world scene and ascend to power, with the Dragon mimicking the role of the Father (Rev13:2), the Antichrist/Beast mimicking the role of the Son (Rev13:3), and the False Prophet mimicking the role of the Holy Spirit (Rev13:12). The Antichrist's agenda will comprise the following: 1) establish and lead a totalitarian one-world government (Rev13:16-17), 2) be personally worshiped according to every man's conception of "god" in a one-world religion (2Thess2:4; Rev13:12,15), and 3) exterminate every Jew on earth (Rev12:13-17).

Satan's Devices. The Apostle Paul exhorts believers to resist Satan's attempts to "get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2Cor2:11). Here, Satan's "devices" are his strategies, plans, and purposes. Believers should understand what Satan can and cannot do, what he purposes to do, and how he will go about it. Consider the following things we know about Satan, as well as things we can infer or reasonably surmise.

First, Satan is a creature; he is not omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent. That being said, he is a diabolical genius who is far more intelligent than men (cf. Ezek28:12). While his wisdom has been utterly corrupted by sin, his genius should not be underestimated. Furthermore, the vast network of fallen angels at his disposal effectively multiply his power and extend his presence to a degree that is almost impossible to comprehend.

Second, Satan knows the content of the Bible, probably far better than the most devout believer does. Satan even quotes the Bible when it serves his purpose (cf. Matt4:6; Luk4:10-11). While he may not believe what God has said, his knowledge of it informs his "devices" (i.e., strategies). For instance, he understands that the Bible teaches Jesus Christ will not return to establish His kingdom on earth until He is petitioned to do so by a regenerated nation of Israel (cf. Hos5:15; Matt23:39), which underpins his unrelenting attempts to eradicate the Jewish race.

Third, Satan wants to bring his man (the Antichrist) onto the world scene, but he recognizes that he is restrained from doing so by the ministry of the Holy Spirit¹ working in/through the Body of Christ (i.e., the Church) during

¹ While it is the Holy Spirit who restrains Satan, since Pentecost His temple on earth is in the Church, the Body of Christ (1Cor6:19). In the present dispensation, the

the present dispensation (2Thess2:7). Once the rapture of the Church occurs, he will be free to unleash the Antichrist. However, since the time of the rapture is unrevealed in Scripture and cannot be known (cf. Mk13:32; 1Thess5:2), but is an imminent event that could occur at any moment (Jas5:8; Rev1:3), Satan must have a potential Antichrist present and available on earth at all times. Indeed, this explains why the history of the Church Age is replete with men who appeared to have been legitimate candidates for the Antichrist (e.g., Nero, Constantine, Charlemagne, many of the medieval Popes, Napoleon, Hitler²). These are examples of the "many antichrists" to which the Apostle John alludes, although they were not "the antichrist [who] shall come" (1Jn2:18) to initiate the Tribulation after the rapture; this also explains why the Apostle Paul asserts that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (i.e., potential antichrists are always present on earth; 2Thess2:7; Cp., 1Jn4:3).

The Mystery of Iniquity. What is the "mystery of iniquity" mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:7? The key to understanding the mystery of iniquity is discerned from its antithesis; the "mystery of godliness" is revealed to be "God manifest in the flesh" (1Tim3:16). That is, as the Messiah (i.e., Christ) is "God manifest in the flesh", so the Antichrist will be in some sense Satan manifest in the flesh. This corollary is suggested in the primeval prophecy given in Genesis 3:15.

Genesis 3:15 is the very first prophecy recorded in the Bible. As a judgment on the serpent (i.e., Satan; Rev12:9) for his participation in the fall of humanity, God declared, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel". This verse prophesies the coming and destiny of two persons: 1) the seed of the woman, which is Christ, and 2) the seed the serpent, which will be Antichrist. When Christ came, He was a unique genetic mixture of divine seed with uncorrupted human seed, the God-man (Luk1:35). In an analogous manner, when Antichrist comes, he will be a genetic mixture of Satan's angelic seed with corrupted human seed. It is for this reason that both Daniel and Revelation refer to Antichrist as "the beast", for he will not be (entirely) human.

Such physical angelic incursion³ into the human race was widespread before the Flood, giving rise to the race of "giants" (Hebrew, *nephilim*; Gen6:1-4) and necessitating a global judgment (Gen6:17). Although much more limited after the Flood, Scripture is clear that the phenomenon would continue (Gen6:4). The coming of the Antichrist as the "seed of the serpent" is one of the future⁴ manifestations of this phenomenon, which the Apostle Paul alludes to as "the mystery of iniquity" (2Thess2:7).

Spirit and the Body are inextricably linked and cannot be separated. Thus, removal of the Spirit necessitates the removal of the Church in which He dwells. This demands the Rapture of the Church be pre-tribulational.

² The common factors among historical antichrist figures during the Church Age are: 1) they were European political figures who reigned over the Roman Empire or labored to revive it after its disintegration, and 2) they hated/persecuted the Jews. There were antichrist figures during the previous dispensation as well, including Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and especially Antiochus Epiphanes.

³ To understand the purpose behind the angelic incursions on earth, see the article: *What on Earth is Satan Doing?*

⁴ The question naturally arises as to whether the antichrist figures of history were also Satan's literal seed as the final Antichrist will be. Since in Satan's mind they were all potential antichrists, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that they almost necessarily had to be.