

**THE FUTURE (9)**

—H. L. Heijkoop

*The Antichrist*

The name antichrist occurs only in the epistles of John. But, as we will see, several places in Scripture both in the Old and the New Testament speak of this person.

In 1 John 2 the apostle writes to the "little children" reminding them that the antichrist is coming. In verses 22 and 23 John describes the character of this person. "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is the antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son has not the Father either; he who confesses the Son has the Father also." In 1 John 4:3 and in 2 John 7 John gives a new characteristic: he does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh. In 1 John 2 we find the positive evil: the denial of the truth. In the other places the negative side: not confessing the central truth of God revealed in the flesh.

In 1 John 2 we find first of all Jewish unbelief. He does not deny that the Christ will come. But he denies that Jesus is the Christ. Other places show that he goes so far as to proclaim himself Christ (2 Th. 2:4; Mat. 24:23, 24 and Rev. 13:11). But besides this we find here Christian unbelief: he denies the Father and the Son, the very essence of Christianity. In Christianity God has revealed Himself as Father, and the glory the Lord Jesus possesses as God the Son is presented as centre. The antichrist denies these two truths as well.

He who denies that Jesus is the Christ is not necessarily an antichrist. Every unbelieving Jew denies this. But here it is added that the antichrist denies the Father and the Son. No Jew had ever heard about the eternal relationship within the Godhead. The truth of the Father and the Son is the most complete revelation of grace and truth by God to man and is only found in Christianity. The antichrist had a place in confessing Christendom. He has heard the truth of the Father and the Son, but then he rejects and denies both.

We have seen so far that he unites Jewish as well as Christian unbelief in himself. He is both the head of an apostate Jewry and of an apostate Christendom. The mere fact that this is possible shows how complete the decline will be.

*The Man of Sin.*

Sin began with man's effort to be as God, in response to Satan's deception of Eve (Gen. 3). This attempt culminates in the revelation of: "the man of sin, who opposes and exalts himself on high against all called God, or object of veneration; so that he himself sits down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Th. 2:4). Then, in verse 8, it continues: "And then the lawless one shall be revealed." 1 John 3:4 gives the explanation of these expressions: "Sin is lawlessness." The reciprocal is true as well: lawlessness is sin. Sin is: acting according to one's own will without taking account of God's thoughts; it is: acting without recognizing God's authority over man.

The Lord Jesus, the perfect Man, says in John 4:34: "My food is that I should do the will of Him that has sent Me, and that I should finish His work." And in John 8:29: "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." Christ, who is the true God, came on earth as a servant to glorify His God and Father in all things.

The peculiar characteristic of the antichrist is mentioned in Daniel 11:36: "he will act according to his will." His own will is the only basis for all his actions. That is why we find him to be the personification of sin. And that is why he is referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 as the lawless one. His whole aim is his own glorification.

The king of Babel, as a type of the last possessor of the imperial power that started with the Babylonian Empire, said in his heart: "I will ascend into the heavens, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit upon the mount of assembly in the recesses of the North; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High" (Is. 14:13, 14). The antichrist, however, goes far beyond this. He will place himself in the temple of the God of Israel and show himself that he is god (2 Th. 2:4).

The revealed character of this person and the apostasy that precedes him, show that we should not take the temple of God in a figurative sense as in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 and Ephesians 2:21, 22: "a habitation of God in the Spirit." The Jewish temple in Jerusalem is in view, where he will present himself as "god of Israel."

### *The Son of Perdition.*

2 Thessalonians 2:3 clearly shows that the antichrist will not come unless the apostasy has come first. This verse does not deal with apostate Jewry. It is true that Scripture predicts that the mass of the Jewish people will also fall away before the time of the end, we can find this in Deuteronomy, the Psalms and the Prophets, and verse 4 is connected with that. But verse 3 speaks of the apostasy of Christendom.

The personal letters in the New Testament (Timothy, Peter, John and Jude) repeatedly mention that in the last times some will fall away from the faith. That is apostasy. However, that is not yet the apostasy mentioned here. The apostasy comes only after the Assembly has been taken up and those who are Christians in name only are left on the earth. Then the great and general apostasy of Christendom will take place and the essential points of Christianity will be openly denied (see also 1 John 2). The antichrist will come from this apostasy. Therefore he is referred to as the son of perdition. It is a general truth that the corruption of the most precious thing is the greatest corruption.

The antichrist, however, will not only apostatize from Christendom but also from the Jewish faith. We also note his apostasy from the natural man. The latter two points can be seen in verse 4, where he opposes and exalts himself on high against all called God and sits down in the Jewish temple.

### *The King of the Jews.*

In the preceding lines we saw the religious character of the antichrist. In the so-called Christian countries he will be the religious leader of apostatized Christianity. The political power of these nations, however, will be in hands of the head of the restored Roman Empire who will receive his power, throne and great authority, directly from the devil (Rev. 13). The power of the antichrist will consequently be spiritual, although he will use it — according to Revelation 13 — to establish the restored Roman Empire.

As soon as the prophecies make direct reference to the Jews, the presentation changes. In contrast with Christendom, Jewry is connected with the earth. Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord in Jerusalem (1 Ch. 29:23). The coming of Christ (Messiah) means for Israel: "deliverance from our enemies and out of the hand of all who hate us; ... to give us, that, saved out of the hand of our enemies, we should serve Him without fear, in piety and righteousness before Him all our days" (Luke 1: 71, 74, 75).

Therefore, when we study the Old Testament prophecies, we see predominantly the political character of the antichrist. In Israel the antichrist will occupy the position of reigning monarch. In the prophecies he is more than once referred to as "the king" without further identification. He will be a well-known figure for Israel, dominating the time of the end.

When the Lord Jesus came in the name of His Father He so little satisfied the desires of their unbelieving hearts that they rejected Him. When the antichrist comes in his own name they will accept him (John 5:43); he will be the man after their heart. But in the middle of the seventieth year-week he will show his true face; he will also outwardly apostatize from the Jewish religion (cf. Dan. 9:27). At that time the faithful remnant of Israel will flee from Jerusalem because he will instigate a terrible persecution against them.

The Psalms repeatedly refer to a distinct godless person who will oppress the remnant; we can see him there. In Isaiah 57:9 the unbelieving people are reprov'd because they honour the king and bring him presents. In Zechariah 11:6 God says, in judgment, that He will give the inhabitants of the country in the hand of their king. In Isaiah 30:31-33 God pronounces His judgment over him, as the Assyrian so he will be struck by Jehovah's judgment. That is the same thought as expressed in 2 Thessalonians 2. In Isaiah 11:4 we find it again, but there he is called the wicked one.

Daniel 11:36-45 refers to the antichrist and the King of the North. "The king shall do according to his will, and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, he will not regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women." Those that recognize him he will honour and, as reward, divide the land amongst them. He will disrupt the worship of God and in His place he will honour the god Mauzzim, who is a war god. But then the King of the South and the King of the North (Egypt and Syria) will attack him. The King of the North will conquer and the antichrist must flee. Here we find the explanation why he is only called the false prophet in Revelation 19, and no longer referred to as king. Zechariah (11:17)

had predicted this. There we read earlier that first his power will be taken from him (his arm), and that he will lose entirely his discernment (his right eye). This last thing is demonstrated in Revelation 19, where he, allied to the Roman Empire, prepares for battle against the Lord Jesus, Who has descended from heaven. If we compare Daniel 11:44 and 30 with Zechariah 14:4 and Revelation 19 we can deduct that the antichrist returns to Palestine with the Roman Emperor and his armies in an effort to recapture the land and retake Jerusalem. At that very moment, however, the Lord Jesus will appear and destroy them. As we are taught by Revelation 19 the antichrist and the Roman Emperor will be cast alive into hell.

The method in which judgment is executed we find not only in Revelation 19 but also in 2 Thessalonians 2, Isaiah 11:4 and 30:33. The "breath of His mouth" is the expression of the inner energy of the Godly power, either with a view to creation (Ps. 33:6b) or judgment (2 Sam. 22:16; Job 4:9; Ps. 18:15; Is. 11:4 and 30:33). It is not a tool, but the Divine source of power, executing its purpose by a word.

### *The two Beasts.*

In Revelation 13 we see two beasts as powerful tools of Satan. Satan has been cast out of heaven and exerts all his power here on earth. However he does not do this openly but uses instruments for it.

The first beast rises out of the sea, which typifies a condition where no fixed form and order exists. It has ten horns and seven heads and receives its throne and power from Satan. In the preceding chapter of our study we saw that this is the Roman Empire. In verse 11 we see a second beast rise up, this time not out of the sea but out of the earth. In Revelation the earth presents a condition of governmental order. This second beast is a political power for it has two horns. It presents itself as if it is Christ: it looks like a lamb, but it has only two horns, not seven as the Lord Jesus in Revelation 5:6. Its speech reveals who it is: "it spoke like the dragon."

The second beast appears to rise after the first. It comes when the sea is changed into earth. Verse 12 confirms this, for it exercises all the authority of the first beast before it. It does great signs and causes even fire to fall from heaven on the earth. In the Old Testament this was always a sign of the presence of Jehovah. We see this at the dedication of the temple and we see it on Mount Carmel at the time of Elijah. There God showed that He, rather than the idol of Baal, was God. This sign is performed by the second beast and thereby he deceives both the apostate Christians and apostate Jews so that they acknowledge him.

We notice that his political power does not equal that of the first beast. The latter had 10 horns whereas this one has only 2. Although it is a political power, yet its influence is more religious in nature. Just as the first beast is head of the Roman Empire, so will the second beast be the religious leader, although it is politically subordinated to the first beast. It imitates the Lord Jesus, both as king and as prophet, and therefore he is, in Revelation 19, referred to as the false prophet. Revelation 13 shows how closely these two beasts cooperate with each other. The second beast causes the people to worship the first beast.

Many believe the first beast to be the antichrist. But I believe we will arrive at a different conclusion when we carefully compare Scripture with Scripture. In 2 Thessalonians 2:2 it says of the antichrist that "his coming is after the working of Satan with all kinds of signs and wonders." That is what Peter says in Acts 2:22 of the Lord Jesus. With the antichrist, however, the power, signs and wonders are "of a lie" and a demonstration of satanic power. In Revelation 13 we find that those signs are only performed by the second beast, whereas the first beast does not perform any signs at all. The mere description of the second beast clearly indicates it to be the antichrist: it resembles a lamb, which is the well-known presentation of the Lord Jesus in the Revelation (see e.g. 5:6; 6:16; 7:9-17; 15:3; 19:7-9 etc.).

It is entirely in agreement with Scripture that the antichrist will not possess all political power. The Lord Jesus will possess all power, this is symbolized by the seven horns of Revelation 5:6. The antichrist has only two horns and will not be able to destroy the powers of this world. God has reserved this right for the Lord Jesus.

*To be cont'd*

## **GUIDES TO SPIRITUAL HEALTH — WATER**

—G. W. Steidl

It sounds trite to say that every living thing needs water. Fresh, clean, pure water. Without it life begins to fade and droop and eventually ceases.

In the spiritual realm, lack of water becomes even more acute. Multitudes of people (perhaps you're one) are fading and drooping, finding life about as vibrant as week-old lettuce. Their problem? No living water!

This problem is universal and timeless. It provides the headlines behind the headlines. Over 2500 years ago Jeremiah expressed it well, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

How odd that upon entering a desert we should abandon as excess baggage our water supply. Yet this is precisely what we do when we reject God. Pursuing happiness without Him, and seeking life on the purely material sensual level, we eventually experience the emptiness of "broken cisterns that hold no water." At this point, many resign themselves to mere existence and just go through the motions. A few, like the hero of Jack London's novel, MARTIN EDEN, foolishly think that death will provide sweet release and commit suicide.

But some open the Bible and find that living water abounds. As they realize that their spiritual thirst is really because they turned their backs on God and tried to hack it on their own, and that He didn't create them for this kind of miserable independent existence — then they learn with amazement that Jesus Christ loved them enough to pay the death penalty for their rebellion against God; and that He rose again, conquering death and giving new life. Receiving Him as Lord and Saviour, they begin to learn the meaning of His words, "Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst... (it) shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Their thirst is quenched.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In the last issue of COME AND SEE we lacked space to answer the second part of the question: What is wrong with the Christian who does repeatedly what he pledges not to do? How does he set about stopping it altogether?

We already referred to Romans 8:29b, and 2 Corinthians 3:18. The first verse shows us that God has a purpose with those who know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour; He wants them to be conformed to the image of His Son. That means that in all the things they do, in their entire behaviour, they are to resemble the Lord Jesus. Now that is just what you want, isn't it? That, I suppose, is why you went so far as to pledge that you wouldn't do this certain thing anymore. Just as the man in Romans 7:29 discovered that inwardly he had a desire for God's law, so you discover now that your desire to resemble Christ is God's desire as well. This is a normal thing for a born-again person, his new nature longs to do things pleasing to God. That is a good discovery, but it does not give you power over sin.

When did the man in Romans 7 experience a change? I think you will agree that we see this in verse 25. He had just concluded that he in himself was wretched; there was not a bit of help to be expected from his own will, desire or determination. Although he was born again he had no power over sin, no victory. But then, suddenly, seemingly out of the blue, he gives thanks. Why this sudden change? Because he looks to the Lord Jesus. So the answer is: look to Him, be occupied with Him and He will be your strength.

This you will find confirmed in other parts of the Bible. Paul says in Philippians 4:13, "I have strength for all things in Him that gives me power." How is this brought about? I believe 2 Corinthians 3:18 gives the pattern: "We all, looking on the glory of the Lord, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit."

So, what is the answer to the question, how do we go about it if we want to become free of things that dishonour our Lord? We look at Christ in faith! We are to be occupied with Him, not with ourselves, nor with the dangers! When we are occupied with Christ, the Holy Spirit changes us into the image of Christ.