

# ANTI-CHRIST

## HISTORY OF

### PART VII

#### THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

*by Albert James Dager*

**T**he Assyrian captivity of Israel's northern ten tribes was begun around 740 B.C. It was shortly before this that the Olympiad Games began in honor of Greece's gods, believed to live on Mount Olympus. The first games were held in Olympia, Greece, near the towns of Elis and Pisa, at a sanctuary for the Greek gods. They began as an annual foot race of young women competing for the position of priestess for the goddess Hera. At the time, they were known as the Heraea Games. Eventually the games became a competition between athletes from the Greek city states. Around the fifth century B.C., the games were restricted to male participants. The games ended around A.D. 395.

The Olympiad was Greece's paean to its gods. Virtually all the nations had fallen prey to the anti-Christ spirit. They had become steeped in idolatry through their mystery religions led by shamans, priests, oracles, and other spiritual leaders who kept the people from the knowledge of YHWH.

Just as the rest of the world continued in its downward spiral into idolatry, Israel and Judah followed suit. But they could not escape God's love and commitment to His covenants. He determined that both nations would be chastised by sending them into captivity. Israel would be the first to feel God's rod of correction as prophesied by Isaiah, when Assyria began to assert its strength. The prophet Hosea gave the warning to Israel as early as the reign of Uzziah in Judah (about the time of Jeroboam II in Israel):

The word of YHWH that came to Beer's son Hosea in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Joash's son Jeroboam, king of Israel—the beginning of the word of YHWH by Hosea: And YHWH said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of prostitution and children of prostitution, for the land has committed great whoredom, departing from YHWH."

So he went and took Diblaim's daughter Gomer who conceived, and bore him a son.

And YHWH said to him, "Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the

house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease. And it shall come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."

And she conceived again and bore a daughter. And God said to him, "Call her name Loruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away. But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and will save them by YHWH their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."

Now when she had weaned Loruhamah she conceived and bore a son. Then God said, "Call his name Loammi, for you are not my people, and I will not be your God." (Hosea 1:1-9)

This prophecy came to Hosea approximately 40 years before Assyria began its attacks against Israel. The Assyrian captivity, ordained by God but implemented by anti-Christ, began with the reign of Israel's king Pekah in Samaria:

In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Ramaliah's son Pekah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH. He did not depart from the sins of Nebat's son Jeroboam, who made Israel sin.

In the days of Israel's king Pekah, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-ma'achah, and Jonoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. (2 Kings 15:27-29)

This first foray of Assyria against Israel resulted in the capture of three of the northern kingdom's ten tribes: Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Although these three tribes had recently been valiant in fighting, and called upon YHWH to help them (1 Chronicles 5:18-24), it wasn't long before they again succumbed to the anti-Christ spirit that plagued the entire nation of Israel:

And they transgressed against the God of their fathers and went whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them.

And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, (the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser, king of Assyria), and he carried them away—even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh—and brought them to Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, to this day. (1 Chronicles 5:25-26)

Pul was another name for Tilgath-pilneser. Although part of anti-Christ's design to destroy Israel, Pul was not aware that God was stirring him up to do so.

Why did God cause these three tribes to go into captivity before the others? Perhaps it was because having been granted victory over their enemies by YHWH they wasted no time in again turning away from Him to false gods. They knew better. Nothing is said of the other tribes' departure from idolatry to turn for a short time to YHWH.

Whatever God's reason, eventually all of Israel was taken by the Assyrians, never to return to their homeland except for a small remnant as prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 10:20-23).

Israel's last king was Hoshea who, like his fathers before him, had neglected YHWH and worshipped false gods. He had become subject to Assyria's king Shalmaneser, but tried to make an alliance with Egypt for protection against Shalmaneser, refusing to continue paying taxes to him. Scripture's account of Israel's last days in the Land is brief:

In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Elah's son Hoshea began to reign in Samaria over Israel for nine years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of YHWH, but not like the kings of Israel who came before him.

Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him tribute.

And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, for he had sent messengers to Egypt's king, So, and brought no tribute to the king of Assyria as he had done year by year. Therefore the king of Assyria captured him and bound him in prison.

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years.

In Hoshea's ninth year the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. (2 Kings 17:1-6)

Leaving a small remnant in Israel, the anti-Christ Shalmaneser settled people in the Land from various areas of his kingdom, including from Babylon:

And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the children of Israel, and they possessed Samaria, and lived in its cities.

And so it was at the start of their living there that they did not fear YHWH. Therefore YHWH sent among them lions that killed some of them.

Therefore they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, "The nations that you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the ways of the God of the land, therefore he has sent lions among them, and, look, they slay them because they do not know the ways of the God of the land."

Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Take one of the priests whom you brought from there, and let him go and live there, and let him teach them the ways of the God of the land."

Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear YHWH.

However, every nation made gods of their own and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made—every nation in their cities in which they lived.

And the men of Babylon made Succothbenoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

So they feared YHWH, and made from the lowest of themselves priests for the high places, who sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

They feared YHWH, but served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from there. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they do not fear YHWH, nor do they follow the statutes, or follow the ordinances, or follow the law and commandment which YHWH commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel. (2 Kings 17:24-34)

The settling of foreigners in the Land led to hybrid forms of religion that included worship of YHWH along with worship to different gods. This is why, after Judah returned from captivity in Babylon, the Jews hated the Samaritans. They rightly considered them idolaters who had perverted the ways of the God of Israel.

Although Hosea had prophesied of the Assyrian captivity of Israel his prophecy did not abandon Israel altogether:

"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered, and it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there it shall be said to them, 'You are the sons of the living God.'

"Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and hold one head, and they shall come up out of the land, for the day of Jezreel shall be great." (Hosea 1:10-11)

According to the prophecies of Ezekiel as well, it yet remains for all of Israel to be restored to the Land after Christ returns to rule and David again sits on his throne in Jerusalem:

YHWH says this: 'Look! I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, where they have gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to

them all, and they shall no longer be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms anymore at all. Neither shall they defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions, but I will save them out of all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them so that they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

And My servant David shall be king over them, and they all shall have one shepherd. They shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them.

And they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have lived, and they shall live therein—even they and their children, and their children’s children forever. And My servant David shall be their prince forever.

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them—it shall be an everlasting covenant with them—and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore.

My tabernacle shall also be with them. Yes, I will be their God, and they shall be My people, and the heathen shall know that I, YHWH, sanctify Israel when My sanctuary shall be in their midst forevermore. (Ezek 37:21-28) (See also Isaiah 11:10-16.)

God has not yet brought all of Israel and Judah together out of the Diaspora into one nation in the Promised Land. This must yet be future, after David is resurrected to sit on the throne of Israel gathered from all the nations during the Millennium. David will again be king over all Israel, and they will have one Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who will reign as King over all the nations at that time.

There are those who say that “David” in this Scripture is really Jesus. But this was written to Israel who knew who David was. He was never thought to be the Messiah, but the nation did look forward to the coming Messiah who would be its Shepherd. David is David; Jesus is Jesus. David will be the king of Israel under the King of Israel and the whole earth, Jesus the Messiah of Israel.

Scripture does not say much about Israel’s captivity by Assyria. It does, however, focus quite a bit on Judah’s captivity by Babylon. We will see how anti-Christ manifests himself both as an instrument of God’s judgment and as an enemy of God’s people.

### **JUDAH’S JUDGMENT**

To begin, we must remember that Judah is the tribe through whom the Messiah of Israel was to come. This is why Judah has been preserved throughout the millennia since its patriarch was born to Jacob. God did not treat Judah the same as he treated the other eleven tribes. Even the tribe of Levi went into the Diaspora except for a remnant that served as priests in Judah.

Because of Judah’s importance to God’s plan of redemption, the anti-Christ spirit was set against the nation to destroy it. Having used Assyria to drive the other tribes from the Land, he set his face against Judah by stirring Babylon to take it captive. In both cases he was used by God as His instrument of judgment. But God never determined that either Israel or Judah would be utterly destroyed or removed from the prospect of redemption.

Assyria’s sudden rise to power alarmed not only Israel, who had already lost three of its tribes, but the Syrians as well. This caused Israel to ally with Syria and to call upon Judah to join them in mutual defense against the Assyrians. Judah’s rejection of their plea gave occasion for anti-Christ to stir up Israel and Syria to attack Judah. Yet this was God’s plan, not for the destruction of Judah, but for the destruction of Israel’s king, Pekah, and Syria’s king, Rezin (Isaiah 7:1-9).

Even so, anti-Christ influenced Judah’s king Ahaz to worship Baal and to burn his sons as sacrifices. In spite of this, God offered to help him against Israel and Syria. But being anti-Christ himself, Ahaz spurned God’s help and trusted in the strength of his own army, thus bringing much destruction upon his nation:

Therefore YHWH his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and they struck him and carried away for themselves a great multitude of captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with a great slaughter. For Remaliah’s son Pekah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, who were all valiant men, because they had forsaken YHWH God of their fathers.

And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king’s son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah, who was next to the king.

And the children of Israel carried into captivity from their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and also took away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. (2 Chronicles 28:5-8)

Anti-Christ’s plan was to use Israel and Syria to utterly destroy Judah. Although God allowed Judah to suffer and go into captivity to Israel, He used the prophet Oded to chastise Israel’s army and to convince the people to send the captives back to Judah (2 Chronicles 28:9-15).

Even though YHWH showed favor to Judah, Ahaz still sought help from Assyria to fight against the Edomites and Philistines. The king of Assyria came, but he didn’t help Ahaz. Instead he plundered his house and the temple at Jerusalem. Judah then became subject to Assyria, but was allowed to remain and pay taxes.

Upon Ahaz’s death his son Hezekiah tore down the idols his father had set up. He had the temple rededicated to YHWH and called upon all Judah to worship the true God. He then invited all of Israel to come to the Passover celebration and to return to YHWH with the promise that, if they were faithful, God would return the captives from Assyria:

So the couriers went from city to city throughout the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even to Zebulun, but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Nevertheless some from Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 30:10-11)

Anti-Christ had thoroughly corrupted Israel through its history of ungodly kings, every one of which had turned from YHWH to false gods. Only a very small number from among the remnant remaining in the Land heeded the call to worship at the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

After this time of spiritual renewal the prophet Isaiah warned Judah not to return to their idolatry lest they be destroyed. Yet he is compelled by God, who knew Judah would fail, to prophesy of their coming captivity by Babylon (Isaiah 28:2-29:16). As it turns out, Hezekiah was followed by only one righteous king, Josiah. Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, starts out in idolatry but eventually repents. Manasseh's son, Amon was anti-Christ, and every king after Amon's son Josiah was anti-Christ, leading to Judah's captivity. Even so, God assures Israel and Judah that redemption will one day come (Isaiah 27:2-13; 29:22-24; 32:12-33:24).

Hezekiah's reign over Judah was not without its troubles from anti-Christ. Hezekiah became ill and was near death when God did a remarkable thing as recorded in 2 Kings:

In those days Hezekiah was sick to death. And the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, came to him and said to him, "YHWH says this: 'Set your house in order, because you will die, and not live.'"

Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed to YHWH, saying, "I implore You, O YHWH, remember now how I have walked before You in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Your sight."

And Hezekiah sorely wept.

And it happened that before Isaiah went out into the middle court, the word of YHWH came to him, saying, "Turn back and tell Hezekiah, the captain of My people, 'YHWH, the God of your father David, says this: "I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of YHWH. And I will add to your days fifteen years, and I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for my servant David's sake.'"

And Isaiah said, "Take a lump of figs."

And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.

And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that YHWH will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of YHWH the third day?"

And Isaiah said, "You shall have this sign from YHWH—that YHWH will do the thing which He has spoken—shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?"

And Hezekiah answered, "It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees. No, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees."

And the prophet Isaiah cried out to YHWH, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward from where it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz. (2 Kings 20:1-11)

Hezekiah wrote a thanksgiving to YHWH as recorded in Isaiah 38:9-20. But then he allowed the anti-Christ spirit to influence him, becoming prideful in his heart:

But Hezekiah did not give back according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was lifted up. Therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart—both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem—so that

the wrath of YHWH did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah. (2 Chronicles 32:25-26)

God rewarded Hezekiah for his repentance, and gave him many riches and possessions. He also blessed the nation of Judah for Hezekiah's sake. But Hezekiah again succumbed to pride when emissaries from the king of Babylon came to bring gifts because he had heard of Hezekiah's sickness. Hezekiah showed the emissaries everything in his kingdom—all his treasures and his armory. This prompted God to send Isaiah to him with the prophecy that all he had, including those born to his household, would one day be taken away to Babylon. But Hezekiah was content with the belief that there would be peace in his lifetime.

Perhaps as a further test of Hezekiah's heart, God allowed the anti-Christ spirit to lead Sennacherib to invade Judah. In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign Assyria's king Sennacherib captured all the fortified cities of Judah. Hezekiah knew his strength was too little to resist the Assyrians so he offered to pay tribute to Sennacherib. To do so he stripped the temple of the gold he had used to cover the doors and doorposts. But Sennacherib was driven by the anti-Christ spirit to mock YHWH and to challenge His ability to preserve Judah (2 Kings 18:17-37). Hezekiah went to the temple to plead with God for deliverance from the Assyrians, and the Angel of YHWH slew 185,000 men of Sennacherib's army while they slept, causing Sennacherib to retreat.

At the end of the fifteen-year extension of his life Hezekiah died and was succeeded by his son Manasseh, who led the people back into idolatry:

And YHWH spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not listen. Therefore YHWH brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with a ring in his nose, and bound him with shackles, and took him to Babylon. (2 Chronicles 33:10-11)

This is another case where God used anti-Christ to chastise His people. To his credit Manasseh turned again to the true God and was restored to his kingdom. He then tore down the idols and illicit altars and shrines he had erected, turning the people of Judah back to the living God (2 Chronicles 33:12-17).

During this time God's prophet Nahum prophesied the destruction of Nineveh. This is some 125 years after that city's inhabitants had repented in response to Jonah's preaching. Nineveh was a city in Mitanni, a Hittite vassal state in northern Syria. Around the 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Nineveh was captured by Assyria. Nineveh was renowned for its worship of Ishtar, for which Jonah was sent to call it to repentance.

It was Sennacherib who built Nineveh into a major city of the Assyrian Empire. By Nahum's time anti-Christ had seduced Nineveh to stray so far from its repentance that it had embraced the Assyrian hallmark of unspeakable cruelties against Assyria's enemies. The Assyrians were infamous for their torture and killing methods.

God brought the Meds, Babylonians and Scythians against Nineveh so that within some forty years after Nahum's prophecy there was no trace of the city left. The remains of Nineveh would not be found for some 2500 years, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon who also succumbed to anti-Christ, only without the repentance that his father came to. Amon ruled for only two years and was followed by his son Josiah who would prove to be the last righteous king in Judah. In spite of Josiah's virtue God's judgment upon Judah would remain firm:

And there was no king like him before him who turned to YHWH with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses. Neither did there arise after him any like him.

Nevertheless, YHWH did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath which burned against Judah because of all the anger to which Manasseh had provoked Him.

And YHWH said, "I will remove Judah out of My sight also, just as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'" (2 Kings 23:25-27)

Because of Josiah's young age of eight when he took the throne, God called one of Josiah's distant relatives, descended from Hezekiah, to be the spiritual leader to turn Israel from its idolatry. Zephaniah was called around 630 B.C. to warn Judah of its impending judgment (see the Book of Zephaniah).

Zephaniah's prophecies are often mistaken to apply to the very last days of God's judgment upon the earth. But it was really God's warning of "the Day of YHWH" which would bring Judah into captivity.

That's not to say there are no verses applicable to both times, but the primary context is God's judgment upon Judah. Yet Zephaniah also finishes with God's promise of restoration during the Millennium not only of Judah, but of all Israel (Zephaniah 3:8-20).

No doubt Zephaniah's proclamations influenced young Josiah, but it wasn't until he was about 16 years of age that he was able to begin his reforms in Judah, tearing down all the idols and their shrines.

Around the same time that Zephaniah was warning Judah, another great prophet arose. This prophet came to be known as "the weeping prophet" because of his lamentations concerning Israel's unfaithfulness and the impending judgment of Judah. Jeremiah likened Israel to an unfaithful wife, and that she was, seduced by anti-Christ to commit spiritual fornication with false gods:

YHWH also said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, 'You turn to Me.' But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

"And I saw, when for all the causes by which backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away and given her a bill of divorce, still her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also.

"And it happened that through the lightness of her whoredom she [Israel] defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with sticks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but deceitfully, says, 'YHWH.'"

And YHWH said to me, "The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, 'Return, you backsliding Israel, says YHWH, and I will not cause My anger to fall on you, for I am merciful, says YHWH, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have sinned against YHWH your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice, says YHWH. Turn, O backsliding children, says YHWH, for I am married to you, and I will take you one from a city, and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds after My heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days, says YHWH, they shall no longer say, "The ark of the covenant of YHWH," nor will it come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall that be done anymore.

'At that time they shall call Jerusalem "the throne of YHWH" and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of YHWH, to Jerusalem. Neither shall they any longer walk after the imagination of their evil hearts.

'In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance to your fathers.'" (Jeremiah 3:6-18)

Again we see that during the Millennium all Israel and Judah will be gathered in the Land together. It is not for the present time, nor is the current anti-Christ state of Israel the fulfillment of these prophecies. It remains for the Lord Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, to accomplish this upon His return.

While the prophets were warning Judah to turn away from idolatry they were persecuted by anti-Christ. The men of his own town plotted to kill Jeremiah but God revealed this to him and declared His punishment upon them (Jeremiah 11:18-23).

If there has been one consistent sign of anti-Christ it is persecution against God's prophets. It is no different today than it was from the time God raised up His first prophet. Nor will it ever be different until Satan is bound.

Still, under Josiah, Judah did experience a brief time of spiritual revival. Josiah's command to repair the temple was heeded with faithfulness. In the process the Book of the Law of YHWH was discovered. When it was read to Josiah he tore his robes and inquired of God what should be done. He renewed the Covenant between God and His people who were still in the Land—Judah, Benjamin, and a remnant of Israel—and increased his reforms upon the idols in the Land, even as far north as Bethel in Israel. For this, God promised that Josiah would die in peace and that he would not see the disaster that would ultimately come upon his nation.

Throughout the known world conflict was rising everywhere as powerful nations, each under anti-Christ's minions, vied for supremacy. During Jeremiah's time Babylonia rebelled against its Assyrian masters and the Babylonian Empire was established. In Greece the move toward the world's first democratic state was

stirring as citizens began overthrowing their kings. It would be over one hundred years before "democracy" would be established.

With all his righteousness, Josiah succumbed briefly to the anti-Christ spirit in not listening to God who spoke to him through Pharaoh Necho whom Josiah opposed in battle:

After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Egypt's king Necho came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates, and Josiah went out against him.

But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, you king of Judah? I am not coming against you today, but against the house with which I am at war, because God commanded me to make haste. Stop your meddling with God, who is with me, so that He not destroy you."

Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself so that he could fight with him, and did not listen to the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.

And the archers shot at king Josiah, and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am terribly wounded."

Therefore his servants took him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the tombs of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. (2 Chronicles 35:20-24)

Neco was on his way to fight on the side of Assyria against the Babylonians. No doubt Josiah thought he was protecting Judah's interests by opposing Necho. To Judah's thinking, Assyria posed the greater threat. Josiah wasn't aware that God had ordained Babylon's rise to power. And it was Babylon, not Assyria, who would end up being Judah's oppressor. Josiah either didn't believe Necho was speaking for God, or was persuaded in his own mind what would be the better course of action. He chose to fight Necho and paid the price.

After Josiah's death his son Jehoahaz ascended the throne of Judah. He was anti-Christ and began to lead Judah back into idolatry. After only a few months, however, Pharaoh Necho took him captive and put Josiah's other son Eliakim in his place. Necho changed the name of Eliakim (Heb., "God raises up") to Jehoiakim (Heb., "YHWH raises up").

There is no indication why Necho would change his name, but it is certainly more specific to name "YHWH" rather than merely "God," as the source of his authority. Was this a slap at YHWH by Necho? Or was it merely a mocking of Judah? Or did Necho really believe that YHWH had ordained him to be his instrument in placing Eliakim on the throne? Certainly this last idea is true, as all power comes from the true God, but we don't really know Necho's thoughts.

In any case, "Jehoiakim was also anti-Christ and continued Jehoahaz's policy of leading Judah into idolatry. His reign lasted eleven years. With Josiah gone, God's prophet Jeremiah again became anti-Christ's target. When Jeremiah stood in the courtyard of the temple and called Judah to repent, threatening destruction if it did not do so, the priests, the prophets, and all the people who heard him said that he must die. But Jeremiah eventually convinced the people as well as the officials of Judah that

he was speaking for YHWH, and they told the priests and prophets that he should not be put to death. But the prophet Uriah, who had also prophesied the same things against Judah was pursued to Egypt by Jehoiakim and was put to death by the sword (Jeremiah 26:1-23).

Anti-Christ could not destroy Jeremiah simply because the Spirit of God convicted the hearts of the people, at least momentarily, to allow him to live. But Anti-Christ's wrath against Uriah was not deflected. For reasons known only to God, Uriah was struck down by anti-Christ through Jehoiakim.

God directed Jeremiah to record his prophecies on a scroll, which he dictated to the scribe Baruch. He then told Baruch to read the words in the temple. When Jehoiakim heard of Baruch's reading of the scroll he defiantly, and personally, burned the scroll piece-by-piece as a portion of three or four columns was read. This brazen anti-Christ attack against God's Word would lead to his downfall.

(We see today this same attitude toward the Word of God, not only by anti-Christ's outside the Body of Christ, but by those within the Body of Christ. These anti-Christ's pose as ministers of righteousness, shredding the Word of God because it convicts them of their ungodly beliefs and practices that they do not want to give up. They pollute the pulpits of churches to turn the hearts of God's people to worship false gods. These false gods are not necessarily wooden statues with foreign names (although New Age influences in the churches do bring in the gods of eastern religions). These false brethren, like the false brethren of Judah, have built high places and unsanctioned altars where the God of the Bible is named among other gods with whom He must share His glory. Perhaps the most popular false god today is that of self.)

Nebuchadnezzar had gained strength in Babylon. He defeated Egypt's Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish and would eventually take Egypt captive. After defeating Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar turned his attention to Judah. He took Jehoiakim captive to Babylon along with spoils from the temple at Jerusalem, which he put in his temple.

Meanwhile, Jeremiah dictated again to Baruch all that was to be recorded. We have that record today in the Book of Jeremiah.

It was now around 600 B.C. Lao Tze, who would be the founder of Taoism is a teenager. Aesop has recently become famous in Greece for his fables. Soon India's Prince Siddhartha Gautama (who would become "Buddha") will be born.

Upon Jehoiakim's death his son Jehoiachin took the throne. His reign lasted only three months, but he also was anti-Christ, following after false gods and leading Judah to do the same.

Nebuchadnezzar had not yet taken Judah into captivity. But when Jehoiachin decided to rebel against him, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, then took the entire city captive to Babylon. He left only the poorest in the Land to maintain its crops. Thus both Israel and Judah were purged from their Promised Land, never to have their glory return again during this present age. It would appear as if anti-Christ had gained the final victory over God's plan of redemption. ❖