



ANTI-CHRIST

PART XIII

THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

The first four thousand years of human history can be seen as little more than preparation for the most important event the cosmos would ever see. Throughout that time God was preparing for the moment when He would send into the world the Savior of mankind. And not of mankind only, but of the entire cosmos.

Scripture calls the time of this Savior's appearance "the fullness of time":

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we may receive the adoption as sons.

And because you are sons God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

Therefore you are no longer a servant, but a son. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Galatians 4:4-7)

There is much more to this than meets the eye. Indeed, it takes the Spirit of God to illumine our minds to comprehend the magnitude of what took place some two thousand years ago. The "fullness of time" refers to a specific moment in the history of the universe when God Himself would enter into the human experience for the specific purpose of redeeming the lost and revealing His Kingdom to mankind. Through this He opened the way for those born under the Law, which was given because of the transgression of man, to be brought into the family of God—to become adopted sons and joint heirs to His Kingdom.

To accomplish this great manifestation of His grace toward us He first had to reveal His holiness in contrast to the unholy nature of man. He did this by selecting from among humanity one particular man, Abraham, whose faith He honored by bringing forth from him a nation set aside—sanctified—through the giving of the Law. The Law, given through Abraham's descendant, Moses, demonstrated God's righteousness and the obedience He demands of those who would be redeemed from the curse of sin.

We have seen how, throughout history, God preserved that nation, Israel, in spite of repeated attempts by anti-Christ to destroy it or, at the least, to render it ineffective in fulfilling God's plan of redemption. Yet in spite of anti-Christ's strongest efforts, and Israel's consistent failings, God nurtured the nation and preserved it until the fullness of time. Now Israel's grandest purpose would be fulfilled: the Messiah (the Anointed) promised from the time of Adam's fall would come into the world.

This was not an afterthought of God, regardless of what some hyper-dispensationalists might say. God's redemption of mankind was planned from the foundation of the world:

...you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot who truly was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for you who, by Him, believe in God who raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory so that your faith and hope might be in God. (1 Peter 1:17b-21)

The foundation of the world (Gr: *kosmos*) refers to the creation "in the beginning" (Genesis 1:1). The Gospel of John reveals that the person who created all things is the Word of God who became a man:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and not even one thing that was made, was made without Him....

And the Word became flesh and lived among us (and we saw His glory—the glory of the only-begotten by the Father), full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-14)

There have been many throughout history who have claimed to be God's Messiah, but only one person came in "the fullness of time"—the specific time prophesied by the angel Gabriel as recorded by the prophet Daniel:

Seventy sevens are determined for your people and for your holy city to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem until the Messiah the Prince shall be seven sevens, and sixty-two sevens. The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

And after sixty-two sevens Messiah shall be killed, but not for Himself. And the people of the prince that shall come will destroy the city and the sanctuary, and their end shall be with a flood, and until the end of the war desolations are determined. (Daniel 9:24-26)

This is a specific prophecy of a specific time regarding the nation of Israel and the Messiah. Verse 24 states that a specific time of seventy seven-year periods (lit. seventy “sevens,” or seventy times seven years—490 years) would pass until God’s dealing with Israel would be completed.

To “seal up” the vision and prophecy meant to complete it. To anoint the most Holy meant the coronation of the coming eternal King when He comes into His earthly Kingdom.

The part of this prophecy relevant to this writing is verse 25, where Gabriel states that the Messiah would come seven sevens plus sixty-two sevens (483 years) after the decree to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. It was from the time of that decree that the 490 years would commence. The Messiah would come into Jerusalem after 483 years, or seven years before the end of God’s dealing with Israel. Let us see what history has proven:

The initial decree for Israel to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple came from Cyrus, king of Persia in the first year of his reign (cir. 539 BC). This was not specific to the building of the wall of Jerusalem, but only to the temple. However, due to much opposition from Israel’s enemies, the decree was not implemented. The work did not go forward until Artaxerxes I gave the decree to Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem to build the wall. The Book of Nehemiah records the events. It was in the 20th year of Artaxerxes’ reign (465-425 BC) that Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to lay the groundwork to rebuild the wall (Nehemiah 2:1). This would put the decree in the year 445 BC.

Historians put the birth of Jesus at between 7 BC and AD 6. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states:

The course of Jesus’ life and the geographic setting of his ministry can only be given in rough outline. The details are surrounded by many uncertainties. The period within which his ministry and death occurred may, however, be narrowed down with considerable accuracy on the basis of a synchronistic dating of the appearance of John the Baptist in the 15th year of Tiberius (Luke 3:1)—i.e., AD 28/29—which is confirmed by non-biblical sources. But the year and place of Jesus’ birth are uncertain. Mark and John say nothing about them. The only sources for them are the widely divergent birth and

childhood legends in Matthew 1 and 2, where Jesus’ birth and early lot are set in the time of Herod I and the change of regime (4 BC), and the narrative of Luke 2, which links Jesus’ birth with the first registration in Judaea under the emperor Augustus (AD 6). There is also historical evidence of a census carried out about 8 BC. With all of this in mind, many sources estimate the year of birth as 7-6 BC. (The use of BC [before Christ] and AD [Anno Domini, or “in the year of the Lord”] was not common until the Middle Ages.)

If we allow that Jesus began His ministry at about the same time John the Baptist came on the scene according to New Testament accounts, then we would add 445 BC to AD 29 to reach the approximate period of 474 years. Jesus would minister for approximately three to four years before being crucified. He came into Jerusalem being hailed as the King of the Jews or Messiah a few days before His death. Add four years to 474 years and we have 478 years. This still falls a few years short of the 483 years according to Gabriel’s prophecy to Daniel.

Allowing for inaccurate dating of ancient events, five years is a blink of an eye over the span of nearly 500 years. The reasonable question to ask is, who else in the history of Israel fits the role of the Messiah prophesied in Daniel’s encounter with Gabriel?

The dating of Daniel’s writing has been set by historians at somewhere between 616-536BC. It was not written after the fact of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Even secular historians do not dispute the events of the last week before Jesus’ crucifixion.

Most strikingly, the prophecy states that Messiah would be killed immediately after His appearance:

And after sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be killed, but not for Himself: (26a).

So Messiah would come 483 years after the decree to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and would immediately be killed. For what purpose, then, did He come? He died, “not for Himself,” but for those whom He came to redeem for His eternal Kingdom.

But what else was happening among the nations during this time in history? Could there have been any significant challenges to Jesus’ claim of being the Messiah?

Strangely, no event of any historical importance took place during the time from Jesus’ birth until His death and resurrection. No important historical figure, religious or political, arose within any nation including Israel or Rome to impact history in any meaningful way. God did not allow for anyone to enter into history during the time of the Messiah’s prophesied appearance. Jesus Christ is the only person from that time to impact history, and His impact has been greater than any person who ever lived before or since.

There is no legitimate disputing that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies recorded in Daniel, Isaiah, and every book of the Law and the Prophets. These foretold of His healing ministry, of His suffering and death, and of His resurrection, as well as the coming millennial Kingdom of God on the earth with the Son of God on the throne in Jerusalem.

According to Daniel, the Messiah would be killed at the end of the 62nd seven-year period. The last seven-year period—the 70th seven-year period—would see the end of God’s dealing with Israel. In the middle of the last seven-years the temple would be destroyed and the sacrifices cut off. This occurred in AD 70 under the Roman general Titus. From the time of the Messiah’s death until the middle of the 70th seven, some 37 years passed. These 37 years were a time of the Gospel going forth to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world according to Jesus’ command to His disciples (Acts 1:8). From the middle of the 70th seven-year period until the present, some 2,000 years have transpired. This interim period until the second half of the last seven-year period is what Jesus called “the times of the Gentiles”:

“And when you shall see Jerusalem encircled with armies, then know that the desolation of it is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of it get out, and do not let those who are in the countries enter there. For these are the days of vengeance, so that all things that are written may be fulfilled.

“But woe to those who are pregnant, and to those who nurse in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Luke 22:20-24)

This period of destruction is what Scripture calls the time of “Jacob’s trouble”, out of which the Lord Jesus will deliver Israel, and David will again be on the throne (Jeremiah 30:1-11).

The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple after Jesus’ death is confirmed by many historical accounts. Jesus’ ministry and death are also confirmed by historical accounts. But the most compelling accounts are found in the Gospels that relate the fulfillment of ancient prophecies attributable to no one in history other than Jesus Christ. The prophetic nature of Scripture is the signature of God Himself. No other writings have that signature. Yet the god of this world system—Satan—has blinded the eyes of most men to regard Jesus as nothing more than a man who may have been “anointed” or “christed” according to New Age philosophy.

If the perfect record of fulfilled prophecies in Scripture are anything, they are compelling reasons why Scripture must be believed. No writing of strictly human origin can possibly be 100% accurate, particularly when compiled over thousands of years by many different men.

During those thousands of years prior to the appearance of the prophesied Messiah, anti-Christ worked diligently to destroy faith in Him. Now that He had arrived, anti-Christ would have to increase his efforts. And those efforts began almost immediately after His birth.

When Jesus was born there was great fanfare, but not among the world’s elite. Rather, the announcement of His birth came to the most lowly of men—shepherds guarding their flocks.

Commiserate with His humble birth in a stable, and the humble nature of His walk on this earth, the Messiah came with words of reconciliation from God His Father:

And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, look, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very afraid.

And the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for, look, I bring you good news of great joy that shall be for all people. For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men!” (Luke 2:8-14)

God’s offer to mankind is peace—reconciliation—between Him and all mankind which has been separated from Him by their sins. Some modern versions (e.g., English translations of the Latin Vulgate) have rephrased this verse to say, “peace toward men of good will,” implying that God’s grace is limited to certain people who possess a will to do good. But that is not what Scripture says. God’s grace is extended to all mankind through His Son, Jesus the Messiah. The fact that not all mankind will receive His offer does not alter that truth. Anything other than that truth opposes the good news or “Gospel” of Jesus Christ.

The announcement of Jesus’ birth did not escape notice of anti-Christ. Certainly he was impacted by the appearance of the heavenly host. He must have known immediately that his efforts to oppose God would have to be stepped up if he were to maintain his dominion over the earth.

The most logical step would be to have the Messiah killed while still a helpless infant. But God is always prepared for His adversary’s efforts against Him.

Anti-Christ’s first attempt on the Messiah’s life would come through the person of Herod, king of Judea:

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, look, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and have come to worship Him.”

When Herod the king heard these things, he, and all Jerusalem with him, were troubled. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together he demanded from them where Christ would be born. And they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet, ‘And you, Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of you shall come a Governor who shall rule My people Israel.’”

Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, diligently asked them what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the young child, and when you have found Him, bring me word again so that I may also come and worship Him." (Matthew 2:1-8)

The anti-Christ spirit in man doesn't care wherein truth may lie; it doesn't consider the consequences of opposing truth. Although not Jewish by birth, Herod Antipas was descended from Herod Antipater, founder of the Herodian dynasty over Judea through appointment by Julius Caesar. The Herodians "converted" to the Jewish faith for practical purposes, but their history of cruelty was lamented by the Sanhedrin.

Even so, Herod understood that Messiah was prophesied to come. His reason for learning the place of Messiah's birth was not so that he could worship Him, but so that he could kill Him. Herod had no fear of God, but placed his position as king above that of God. His spirit was that of anti-Christ who first conceived of dominion over God's creation:

How you have fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you who weakened the nations are cut down to the ground!

For you have said in your heart, "I will ascend into Heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God! I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north! I will ascend above the heights of the clouds! I will be like the most High!" (Isaiah 14:12-14)

The anti-Christ spirit always seeks dominion in place of God. It is a blind spirit whose hatred of God is so intense that it causes its own destruction. Herod's spirit was that of anti-Christ: knowing the truth of God yet working to destroy that truth.

When the wise men were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the anti-Christ within him was stirred to commit one of the greatest acts of infanticide in recorded history. Outsmarted by God, he flew into a rage and had all boys ages two years and under in Bethlehem and the surrounding area slaughtered. But His earthly father Joseph had also been warned in a dream to protect the child by fleeing into Egypt until Herod's death.

That same spirit of anti-Christ within Herod that has no fear of God works even today in the United States of America, as well as all over the world, where infanticide of a much greater magnitude is carried out daily in abortion clinics.

The transgression of the wicked within the heart reveals that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flatters himself in his own eyes until his iniquity is found to be hateful.

The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he is lacking to be wise, and to do good.

He devises mischief upon his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not hate evil. (Psalms 36:1-4)

All sin is man's attempt to assert himself above God, whether in small ways or in great ways. It is the spirit of anti-Christ against which even the children of God must guard themselves. By God's grace we have a mediator, Jesus Christ, who has taken upon Himself the chastisement for all our sins (Isaiah 53:5).

His sacrifice was not only in His death, but in His life that was lived in total obedience to His Father in Heaven. His life was one of constant resistance against the anti-Christ who sought to destroy Him and His calling.

After Herod's death Jesus was brought by his earthly parents to the city of Nazareth in the province of Galilee. The accounts of His life as a young boy are limited aside from His astounding the teachers in the temple with His understanding and knowledge of Scripture (Luke 2:42-47).

The interim between that event and the beginning of His ministry has become the stuff of legends promulgated by the imagination of fallen men. The anti-Christ spirit, unable to destroy the Lord Jesus, has concocted fantasies that question His divine nature as the Word of God. He is said to have traveled to the East where He learned magic and the wisdom of seers to work miracles (or seeming miracles). Those who say this attempt to limit His abilities to that of a man who can conjure spirits or tap into the spiritual realm to achieve mystical powers.

Such things don't exist except with the aid of devils, but foolish people, unwilling to accept the idea of a sin nature for themselves, can't abide the truth that God provided a Savior to pay for their sins. They, too, have lifted themselves in their imaginations above the heights of the clouds. They want to believe that Jesus is nothing more than an enlightened man—another Buddha or "ascended master." And despite the truth that Scripture is the only history of Jesus that bears the prophetic signature of God, they choose to disregard the elements that prove His divinity (except to devise within their imaginations the idea that all men are gods, albeit some more advanced than others in their alleged godhood).

Some may ask why the Bible doesn't say anything about Jesus' youth beyond His experience in the temple at the age of twelve. The simple answer is that during that time He was growing in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:52); His time to be revealed as the Messiah and King of Israel had not come. It was a period in His life of which God chose to remain silent. The silence of God's Word regarding Jesus' early years gives anti-Christ opportunity to test men's hearts whether or not they would believe that Jesus is who He said He is—the only begotten Son of God—the Word of God who became a man. When the time did come for Him to be revealed, it would be with dramatic evidence of His divinity:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. But John forbade Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and You come to me?"

And answering, Jesus said to him, "Allow it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness."

Then he allowed Him.

And when he was baptized, Jesus immediately went up out of the water, and look, Heaven was opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him. And look, a voice from Heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17)

This anointing by the Father, sending upon Jesus His Holy Spirit, was the beginning of the Lord's ministry. This startling

event did not escape the anti-Christ's notice. Just as with the announcement of Jesus' birth, he recognized that God was at work, and it was time to get to work himself. This time, however, he would try a different tactic: he would attempt to beguile Jesus just as he had Eve and so many after her:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, cast Yourself down, for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge concerning You, and they shall bear You up in their hands lest at any time You dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to Him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not test the Lord your God.'"

Again, the devil took Him up into an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him, "I will give You all these things if you will fall down and worship me."

Then Jesus said to him, "You get away, Satan, for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.'"

Then the devil left Him, and, look, angels came and ministered to Him. (Matthew 3:1-11)

Jesus did not go into the desert haphazardly; He was led by the Spirit of God specifically to face temptation by Satan. It is evident that the devil was present when the Father proclaimed at Jesus' baptism, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." His first two tests appealed to that claim: "If you are the Son of God."

The anti-Christ also knew that eventually all the kingdoms of the world would be given into Jesus' hands at the proper time. Satan's final test was to tempt Him with the fulfillment of that destiny without having to go through the work and suffering ordained by the Father. Here, again, he was attempting to place himself above the stars of God. That is the ultimate goal of anti-Christ. It is not to destroy men's souls; it is not to wreak havoc on the earth through natural disasters; it is not to cause sickness and death. All these are subordinate to accomplishing his determined purpose—to establish himself as equal to God. He will even do "good" (e.g., healing, signs and wonders) if that will serve his purpose.

Still, the anti-Christ's kingdom is one of darkness and death. Jesus worked against this kingdom of darkness through the casting out of devils, the healing of sickness, the raising of the dead. Satan knew that an intruder had come to disrupt his kingdom—to bring light to men in darkness so that they could become that intruder's disciples to do the works that He did.

The kingdoms of this world are in the hands of anti-Christ, and they will remain so until the Lord Jesus returns to wrest them from him. Jesus' disciples are called to be a light in the darkness of this world that is under anti-Christ's headship. Just as Jesus resisted the temptation to rule in this world in order to serve in the Father's Kingdom, so His disciples must do the same. The servant is not greater than the master (John 13:13-17). Jesus is our example of how we should live our lives in this perishing world (vs. 15).

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness was but the beginning of a protracted conflict between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. As we study the life of Jesus we will see the true nature of anti-Christ revealed in terms more palpable than ever seen before or since Jesus walked the earth.