



ANTI-CHRIST

PART XIV

THE MESSIAH'S MINISTRY

Having returned from being tempted by the Devil in the wilderness, Jesus came again to John the Baptist. It is then that John testified of Jesus being the Messiah—the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And more than that—the Son of God:

The next day John saw Jesus coming to him, and said, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who has preference over me for He was before me.’ And I did not know Him. But so that He should be made known to Israel, therefore I have come baptizing with water.”

And John bore witness, saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove from Heaven, and it stayed upon Him. And I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water, the same said to me, ‘Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, it is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’

“And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

Thus began the ministry of God’s only-begotten Son. For when Andrew and Peter heard John the next day again say, “Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” they followed Jesus and became His first disciples. The following day Philip and Nathanael joined Jesus as His disciples.

On the third day after His baptism Jesus attended a wedding feast in Cana in Galilee where, upon the urging of His mother, He turned water into wine. He appears to have done so reluctantly, after telling Mary that His time had not yet come to reveal Himself as the Messiah. This was the first of His miracles, and caused His disciples to put their faith in Him.

Since the time of His temptation in the wilderness until that time there is no record of anti-Christ opposing Jesus. It would be only a matter of days, however, before Jesus Himself would set the stage for the opposition that would eventually lead to His death on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. It was the time of the Passover, sometime around the year AD 27, the exact year being unverifiable:

And the Jews’ Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found sitting in the temple those who sold oxen, sheep and doves, and the moneychangers. And when He had made a whip out of small cords He drove them all out of the temple—along with the sheep, and the oxen—and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables, and said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!”

And His disciples remembered that it was written, “The zeal of Your house has consumed me.”

Then the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do you show us, seeing that You do these things?”

Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

Then the Jews said, “This temple was in construction for forty-six years, and will You raise it up in three days?”

But He spoke of the temple of His body. (John 2:13-21)

This is the first recorded confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders who, having succumbed to rabbinical Judaism in place of the faith given to Abraham and passed down through the Law of Moses, had become complacent in their religion. They saw no problem in making merchandise of God’s people. And they resented this intruder into their money-making schemes.

This was no rash action on the part of Jesus. He took some time to braid the whip He would use on the merchants and moneychangers. His action was calculated, and He knew it would draw the opposition of His enemies.

Still, no overt opposition came His way, although the Pharisees were keeping an eye on Him, and knew that He was gaining and baptizing more disciples than had John. When Jesus learned of the Pharisees’ interest in Him, knowing of their evil hearts, He left Judea and returned to Galilee. He was not yet ready to be delivered into their hands.

On His way to Galilee He passed through Samaria where He met a woman at Jacob’s well. There He revealed to Her that

He was Israel's Messiah (John 4:4-26). Because of the woman's testimony about Jesus many Samaritans came to see and hear Him, and in just two days among them many believed in Him.

Jesus' ministry to the Samaritans was judged as evil by many Jews because the Jews despised the Samaritans whom they considered interlopers and not of pure Israelite stock. The alienation began after the Jews returned from the Assyrian Captivity, believing that those occupying Samaria were aliens from Kutha in Mesopotamia. The Jews referred to the Samaritans as "Cuthim" in a pejorative sense. However, Scripture reveals that not all Israelites from the Northern Kingdom were exiled by the Assyrians; many remained in their land as their subjects. It's highly probable that many of those true Israelites intermarried with non-Israelites during the times of the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities, but they continued to strongly identify with the religion of the Israelites.

The Samaritans claimed that they held to the true religion of the ancient Israelites prior to the Babylonian Captivity, and that they preserved the true religion, as opposed to Judaism, which they believed was a related but altered religion brought back by those who returned from exile.

Jesus' ministry to the Samaritans, as well as His parable about the Good Samaritan, would cause the unbelieving Jews to further reject Him, believing that the Messiah would have nothing to do with the Samaritans. The hatred of the Jews toward the Samaritans would be one of anti-Christ's weapons in his design to destroy the Messiah.

After spending two days in Samaria, Jesus returned to Cana in Galilee where, as His second miracle, He healed the son of a nobleman.

Although Jesus as Messiah would become anti-Christ's greatest target, his attack against this new work of God was first formed against John the Baptist:

But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils that Herod had done, added yet this above all: that he shut up John in prison. (Luke 3:19)

This verse is parenthetical in Luke's account of John the Baptist's ministry, placed between John's proclamation to the Jews to repent and be baptized, and Jesus' baptism which we know was performed by John. Most likely John was imprisoned by Herod not long after Jesus' baptism because John himself had said that he must decrease and the Lord must increase (John 3:30). Also, John's imprisonment came before Jesus embarked upon His first public ministry.

King Herod, though he liked to hear John the Baptist, succumbed to the anti-Christ's desire for John's death. Although saddened to do so, when Herodias instructed her daughter to ask for John's head on a platter after Herod had promised her anything she wanted for having danced so well before him and his guests, Herod had John beheaded. His cowardice is also a trait of anti-Christ.

Leaving His hometown, Nazareth, Jesus went to live in Capernaum, by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah:

Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first He lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who live in the land of the shadow of death, the light has shined. (Isa 9:1-2)

This was the beginning of Jesus proclaiming the same message as that of John the Baptist; "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

At first, His fame spread throughout the whole countryside as He taught in the synagogues. People praised Him. Then He returned to Nazareth. There He provoked the people to turn against Him:

And He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up. As was His custom, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. And there was delivered to Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He opened the book, He found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of YHWH is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of YHWH."

And He closed the book, and He gave it back to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all those who were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say to them, "This Scripture is fulfilled in your ears today."

And all bore Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:16-23)

So far, so good; all spoke well of Him, bearing witness of Him. But then:

And He said to them, "You will surely recite to Me this proverb: 'Physician, heal yourself; whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.'"

And He said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in His own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah when the heavens were shut up three years and six months—when great famine was throughout all the land—but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Sarepta, a city of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

And when they heard these things, all those in the synagogue were filled with wrath and rose up, and threw Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built so that they might throw Him down headlong.

But passing through the midst of them, He went His way and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and

taught them on the Sabbath days. And they were astonished at His teaching because His word had authority. (Luke 4:24-32)

Jesus knew that speaking the scriptural truth of God's mercy toward Gentiles while passing over the afflictions of the Jews would incite the hatred hidden within the hearts of His listeners. He fully knew what their reaction would be.

One ploy of anti-Christ is to portray Jesus as nothing more than "loving," "kind," and "generous" toward everyone in order to disarm people to His true nature and demand for holiness in His people. This is but one example of how He provoked those who at first saw nothing offensive in Him. He made sure they were offended in order to reveal their true hearts.

This incident set the match to the greatest conflagration of warfare between the Kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of darkness thus far seen on earth. It was the beginning of the end for both the Messiah's days on earth in this present age, and Satan's power over the hearts and minds of men.

Returning again to Galilee, Jesus demonstrated His authority over nature by having Simon Peter take Him in his boat to cast a net for fish. Peter obeyed, even though he and his companions had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. When the catch of fish was so great that Peter required his partners in another boat to help, and both boats began to sink, Peter said to Jesus, "Leave me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

From there Jesus began to call those additional men who would comprise His company of apostles. Zebedee's sons, James and John immediately left their father's boat to follow Him upon His word, "Come! Follow Me!"

This was no casual encounter. No doubt James and John had heard Jesus speaking on the shore of Galilee, and would have witnessed the miracle of the fishes.

Taking these men, Jesus went to Capernaum where He taught in the synagogue and caused more people to marvel at His teaching authority. His first recorded encounter with the minions of Satan's kingdom also took place there:

And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying, "Leave us alone! What have we to do with You, You Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know You, who You are—the Holy One of God!"

And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Hold your peace and come out of him!"

And when the unclean spirit had torn him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.

And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What thing is this? What new teaching is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him!"

And His fame quickly spread abroad throughout all the region around Galilee. (Mark 1:23-28)

This was the Kingdom of Heaven's first direct attack against the kingdom of Satan. Until this time Jesus had worked miracles of healing and demonstrated His authority over the natural realm; now He demonstrated His authority over the spirit realm.

The unclean spirit residing in this man was most likely hidden, manipulating the man to do unclean things, perhaps unknown to his contemporaries. He may even have been one of the religious leaders whose hidden sins might never have come to light had Jesus' presence not provoked the unclean spirit to reveal himself.

This incident also prompted the people in Capernaum to bring to Jesus all the sick and those who were possessed by devils.

Leaving there, He went throughout all of Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, healing all the sick, and casting out devils. Large crowds from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and all across Jordan followed Him. After a few days He returned to Capernaum, and further provoked antagonism toward Himself:

And they came to Him, bringing someone sick of paralysis who was carried by four. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. And when they had broken it up, they let down the cot in which the sick from paralysis lay.

When Jesus saw their faith He said to the sick from paralysis, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

And immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned so within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason these things in your hearts? Which is it easier to say to the sick from paralysis, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, and take up your cot, and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins (He said to the sick from paralysis), 'I say to you, arise, and take up your cot, and go your way into your house.'"

And immediately he arose, took up the cot, and went away in front of them all, insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen this before!"

And He went away again by the seashore, and the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. (Mark 2:3-13)

We're not told the further reaction from these particular scribes, but we know that the scribes as a class consistently plotted against the Lord.

After this incident Jesus saw Alphaeus's son Levi (Matthew) sitting in the tax collector's place. He said to Levi, "Follow Me," and he did. The Lord's association with Levi further provoked the religious leaders of the Jews to try to find fault with Him:

And it happened that as Jesus sat at dinner in His house, many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples, for there were many, and they followed Him.

And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?"

When Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are whole have no need of the physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast, and they came and said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?”

And Jesus said to them, “Can the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they shall fast in those days. (Mark 3:15-20)

The Jews put much emphasis on outward cleanliness and the keeping of the Law before others. They were quick to judge sinners and those who did not wash their hands before eating. Here, for the first time recorded, Jesus addressed the spiritual vs. the mundane conditions that separate the truly holy from the outwardly holy. In so doing He stirred the anti-Christ sentiments of the religious leaders who were jealous for their outward righteousness.

This conflict would be exacerbated when He next healed the invalid man by the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day, provoking the Jews to seek His death. They became even more enraged when He said, “My Father is at work here, and I work.” They sought all the more to kill Him because He had not only broken the Sabbath according to their tradition, but said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

The conflict has raged over the centuries over whether or not Jesus is God in the flesh—the Word of God who was in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and who came forth from the Father to create all things. The denial of His divinity is a mark of anti-Christ:

For many deceivers have entered into the world, who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-Christ. (2 John 7)

Jesus Christ (Jesus the Messiah) is testified to be the Word of God who became flesh (John 1). All Scripture and the faith of the saints from the creation of man to the present rest upon this truth. Anyone who denies this truth is anti-Christ according to God’s Word. The vast majority of mankind reject this truth, placing themselves in the camp of anti-Christ. But the conflict between Satan and Jesus as the Word of God would settle the issue once for all when Jesus would rise from the dead. This is why belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus and His faithful saints is essential to the true faith. Those who do not hold that hope have no hope.

Jesus’ entire walk was warfare against the kingdom of anti-Christ. Everything He did—every good work—set Him against Satan’s minions, both men and devils. And it was the Law of Moses that was the catalyst He used against His enemies:

“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you—even Moses in whom you

trust. For had you believed Moses you would have believed Me, because he wrote of Me.

”But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My Words?” (John 5:35-47)

Throughout history anti-Christ has attempted to pervert God’s Word as a means to deceive mankind. He succeeded in deceiving the Jews through their religious leaders who had taken the Word as a set of rules by which they could keep the people enslaved to those religious leaders’ dictates. They perverted the meaning of the Sabbath and all the Law which was given as a blessing to Israel. Instead of blessing, the religious leaders had turned the Law into a curse and subjugated the people to their religious tenets.

When Jesus came He set the record straight, accomplishing several objectives: 1) He set free the people who believed and followed Him; 2) He exposed the evil of rabbinic Judaism that enslaved the people; 3) He destroyed the works of the Devil; 4) He showed the way to the Father for all who believe; 5) He made the way for the Gentiles to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And He did many other things that are too numerous to mention (John 21:25).

Many of Jesus’ works took place on the Sabbath for good reason. The Sabbath was established by God as a delight for Israel—a time to rest from their labors. It was holy to YHWH, but the religious leaders of the Jews had made the Sabbath a burden to the people. The Sabbath had become a time of sorrow rather than a time of delight—a time when the people were bound to the point where they could expect nothing good. Jesus showed that the Sabbath was being misrepresented; He demonstrated that it was always intended to be a time for good. Thus He healed and delivered many on the Sabbath. This stirred the ire of the religious leaders who, in their self-righteousness, desired to keep the people under bondage.

When He and His disciples went through the wheat fields on the Sabbath, plucking grains to eat, the Pharisees exclaimed, “Look! Your disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day!”

But Jesus pointed them to their own Scriptures to recall how David and his men ate the show bread in the tabernacle, which was unlawful, and how the priests seem to profane the Sabbath by working in the temple. His words were meant to bring understanding that God never forbids good works or necessary work for Him on the Sabbath.

But their traditions overrode their understanding and took precedence over God’s Word.

It is much the same today when legalists within the Body of Christ attempt to impose the traditions of men for the sake of outward righteousness.

The hearts of the Jewish religious leaders had become so calloused that they refused to rejoice at the work of God to heal the people. Instead they used those works as a means to find fault with Jesus so that they could kill Him.

The anti-Christ spirit is so perverse that it cannot rejoice at good; it must destroy anything that is truly good—that is, anything that comes from God. Anti-Christ will accuse the

righteous of being evil, calling good “evil,” and evil “good.” This the Pharisees did to Jesus:

Then there was brought to Him one possessed with a devil, blind, and mute, and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and mute both spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, “Is this not the son of David?”

But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “This fellow does not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils!”

And Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” (Matthew 12:22-28)

It was during this event that Jesus warned the people about blaspheming against the Holy Spirit—knowing the truth of God at work and willfully rejecting it, even calling it the work of the Devil. This is apostasy of the worst kind that Jesus said will not be forgiven.

In spite of the Lord’s consistent display of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding of the Scriptures, coupled with His unfailing miracles, none of these things having been witnessed in such fashion since the creation of man, the religious leaders hearts became more hardened against Him. After He had chastised the Pharisees and lawyers during a meal to which a Pharisee had invited Him, they all the more opposed Him and sought how to entrap Him (Luke 11:53-54).

Some might say that this is to be expected, seeing how Jesus consistently provoked and even humiliated His detractors. But there is no excuse for refusing the light of truth regardless how that truth is conveyed. Jesus knew their hearts; He knew their thoughts; He knew that many followed Him for reasons other than those that stem from pure motives. Some followed because they wanted to receive some good thing from Him—a miracle, food, temporal benefits. Some followed because they wanted to find fault in order to solidify their position among the people. Some followed because they wanted to learn how to manifest the same power. Few followed because they wanted to know the truth that could conform them to holiness.

It is no different today. Witness the religious charlatans who make merchandise of God’s people, promising health, wealth, power and prestige. They preach false gospels in order to acquire filthy lucre.

And there are many who continue to find fault with Jesus and with the Word of God because they refuse the conviction of God’s truth. Were Jesus among us today they would seek to kill Him anew.

Knowing the nature of man, Jesus chose to teach in parables so that the hearers would not understand. Contrary to false teachers who say He taught in parables—calling them “word pictures”—so the people would understand:

And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?”

He answered and said to them, “Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but it is not given to them. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whoever does not have, from him shall be taken away even that he has.

“Therefore I speak to them in parables. Because seeing, they do not see, and hearing, they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, ‘By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing, you shall see and shall not perceive.’ For this people’s heart has grown callous, and their ears are dull of hearing, and they have closed their eyes lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. (Matthew 13:10-15)

Jesus was revealing that most men are willfully blind and deaf to truth. Rather than cater to their blindness and deafness, He hid the truth of the Kingdom of Heaven from them except in parables. He explained His parables only to those to whom He chose to explain them.

Yet He spoke plainly certain truths to those who opposed Him—truths that exposed their evil hearts. They evidenced the truth He conveyed to His disciples that if one were to cast one’s pearls before swine, the swine would trample them in the mud and then turn against those who cast them there.

Jesus gave the pearls of truth about the Kingdom of Heaven, and the result was that the Jews as a whole turned on Him and killed Him.

Nor did Jesus go easy on those whom Scripture says believed in Him. He got to the heart of belief to expose the evil intent behind the belief of many:

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are indeed My disciples, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How do you say, ‘You shall be made free?’”

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant does not abide in the house forever. But the Son abides forever. Therefore, if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

“I know that you are Abraham’s seed, but you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father, and you do that which you have seen with your father.”

They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father!”

Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek

to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth which I have heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.”

Then they said to Him, “We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God!”

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God. Nor did I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you cannot hear My word.

“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not live in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie he speaks of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth you do not believe Me.

“Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words. Therefore, you do not hear them because you are not of God.”

Then the Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say well that You are a Samaritan and have a devil?”

Jesus answered, “I do not have a devil, but I honor My Father. And you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My own glory; there is one who seeks and judges. Truly, truly, I say to you, if a man keeps My saying he shall never see death.”

Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a devil! Abraham is dead, and the prophets, and You say, ‘If a man keeps My saying he shall never taste of death!’

“Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead! Whom do you make Yourself to be?”

Jesus answered, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing; it is My Father—of whom you say that He is your God—who honors Me. Yet you have not known Him. But I know Him, and if I should say I do not know Him I shall be a liar like you. But I do know Him, and keep His saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”

Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

Then they took up stones to cast at Him. But Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (John 8:31-59)

We see in this passage of Scripture that anti-Christ lurks in the hearts of all men—even those who believe, at least at first. These people had heard the Lord and believed in Him. Yet He knew that their belief was flawed—that their hearts were infected with the anti-Christ spirit which would turn against Him given the right impetus.

He told them even before it was in their heads that their hearts sought to kill Him. And He was proved right. His words

confirmed that He is the Word of God who has existed from eternity, being YHWH, the only-begotten Son of YHWH the Father.

How can Jesus and the Father both be YHWH?

YHWH is God’s name. We all bear the names of our fathers. Jesus—the Word of God who came forth from the Father—bears the same name as His Father: YHWH. It is He who walked with Adam; it is He who spoke with Abraham, Moses, and others throughout His pre-incarnation. This is why He could say, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” This is also why John the Baptist said that Jesus was before him, even though, physically, John was about six months older than Jesus.

Jesus’ revelation of Himself as the Word of God, making Himself equal with God, was the final straw in his enemies’ minds that made Him worthy of death. It was the truth the anti-Christ spirit used in a futile attempt to destroy the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

Jesus again turned many of His disciples against Him when He said that in order to attain eternal life one must eat His flesh and drink His blood. They took Him literally, and did not understand that His words were spirit (John 6:63). Again He demonstrated a nature contrary to many modern portrayals.

Even among the apostles the anti-Christ spirit worked to sow division. There came a time when they began to argue who was the greatest among them. Jesus put them to shame by telling them that he who wants to be first, must be last, emphasizing that service in the Kingdom of Heaven must be accompanied by humility—just the opposite of the anti-Christ spirit of pride and self-promotion.

At one point He demonstrated this by washing the apostles’ feet. And He rebuked Peter for not wanting Him to do so, exposing Peter’s lack of obedience, until Jesus told Him that unless He washed Peter’s feet, Peter had no part in Him.

We do not normally think of Peter’s protest as the spirit of anti-Christ, but anything, no matter how great or how small, is anti-Christ if it is contrary to the will of God. Even if it comes from a pure motive such as Peter’s, not to allow the Lord to humble Himself before him.

It may not seem proper to the natural mind that God should serve His children, but consider: do parents not serve their children, especially when the children are still in infancy? Does it not take humility for a parent to clean a child or to pick up after him? Is God not a better parent than any human being?

We must allow God to do what He wishes to do, regardless how we perceive His service to us with our natural minds.

This doesn’t mean we make demands on God; it doesn’t mean we take Him for granted; it doesn’t mean we don’t continue to serve Him. It means we conform our minds to the mind of Christ who did not think equality with God to be something to grasp, but left His place in Glory and became humble to the point of dying on the cross at the hands of His own creation (Philippians 2:5-8).

The anti-Christ spirit worked against Jesus even through His own brothers who taunted Him to go to the Feast of Tabernacles in Galilee and perform miracles there.

The same spirit was at work among the crowds that followed Jesus, not only taunting Him, but sowing seeds of doubt among those inclined to hear Him.

Often the religious leaders attempted to seize Jesus; crowds attempted to stone Him or cast Him off a cliff; these occurrences followed His affirmation of His deity. But until His time came, they were powerless to harm Him. And the Jews were divided whether He was from God or the Devil.

Even when Jesus demonstrated His power over death by raising Lazarus, the anti-Christ spirit was hardened all the more in those who refused to believe in Him.

Then many of the Jews who came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done.

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What do we do? For this man does many miracles. Thus, if we leave Him alone all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.

And this he spoke not from himself, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation. And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Then from that day forth they took counsel together in order to put Him to death. (John 11:45-53)

Caiaphas spoke prophetically in the role of high priest, that the Messiah must die for the people. Only his anti-Christ spirit kept him from realizing or understanding the prophecy.

Adding to their sin, the chief priests even plotted to kill Lazarus because many Jews believed in Jesus on account of Lazarus being raised from the dead.

How blind is the anti-Christ spirit to want to undo the work of God in the name of religion.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem to the shouts of "Hossannah!" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of YHWH!" and "Blessed is the King of Israel!" His enemies were plotting His death.

Again Jesus cleansed the temple of the merchants and moneychangers, all the more inciting the anti-Christ spirit to kill Him. But the religious leaders were afraid of the people, many of whom were following Jesus. They knew that if they were to take Him it must be done in secret.

Their opportunity came during the week leading up to the Passover.

Then the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled together at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and determined that they would take Jesus by deceit and kill him. But they said,

"Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." (Matthew 26:3-5)

Now the feast of unleavened bread, which is called the Passover, drew near. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being among the number of the twelve. And he went his way and consulted with the chief priests and captains how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude. (Luke 22:3-6)

Matthew tells us that Judas received thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus, the sum recorded in Zechariah (11:12-13).

Thus did Messiah's earthly life come to an end, ignominiously crucified in the presence of His enemies, taunted and humiliated. The Son of God—the eternal Word of God in the flesh of man—hung among criminals for the crimes and sins of all mankind since Adam to the last yet to be born.

Anti-Christ had gained the victory he so eagerly sought. Certainly he had thwarted God's plan to restore Israel by putting to death the God he so hates.

How would God ever gain the victory now?