

2.

THE ANTICHRIST

As a prelude to this discussion, I would like to take a moment and return to the prophecy of Daniel chapter 11. You may remember that in verses 21-35, most Bible expositors see a description of Antiochus Epiphanes and his evil deeds. Further, we have stated how Antiochus morphs or changes into the Antichrist as the chapter progresses. Then, after verse 35, the passage seems to be speaking only about the Antichrist.

What I would like to suggest here is that some of the earlier verses, i.e. verses 21-35, could and probably do describe *both* Antiochus and the Antichrist. I believe it is very possible that two people could fulfill the prophetic words uttered here. These verses could very easily apply to both the past and the future Antichrist. As proof for this idea, let us consider verse 31. Here we read: "...then they shall

take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.”

The Jews from the time of Antiochus had referred to this event – the one in which he sacrificed a pig and set up an image in the temple – as “the abomination of desolation.” Perhaps even today, they still believe this to be the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy. Certainly the Jews of Jesus’ day held this belief.

But Jesus blew their mind. He rattled their concepts. He said: “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place...” (Mt 24:15). In essence He was saying: “You think that you know what this abomination was. You think it has already happened. But the one of which Daniel spoke has not yet taken place. It is still in the future.”

Returning to our discussion, verse 31 of Daniel 11 is part of the passage which historically speaks about Antiochus. Yet we know from Jesus’ words that it is the actions of the future Antichrist which will be the true or final realization of this verse. So this verse must refer to both men.

Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to think that some of the other verses of this section will also have a double fulfillment in both Antiochus and the Antichrist. With this in mind, we will now take a closer look at the character and activities of the Antichrist.

Many believers are expecting the Antichrist to be a famous, worldly politician. They imagine an urbane, popular, glad-handing, back-slapping, probably immoral political animal, perhaps something like a Bill Clinton, running the U.N. Yet this is not the image which the Bible portrays.

To begin, the scriptures call the Antichrist “a little horn” (Dan 7:8; 8:9). This indicates that he is a relatively insignificant figure until he gains control. In contrast to this, the horn which represents Alexander the Great is described as “notable” and “large” (Dan 8:5,8). He was a strong, able conqueror. He had world-wide fame. The horns representing the four generals who succeeded Alexander are also labeled “notable” (Dan 8:8). These were well-known people.

But, at least in the beginning, the Antichrist “horn” is “little.” Therefore, before he assumes power on the world scene, he will be a small, despised individual whom no one ever imagines could rise up and become what he eventually becomes. This is an important fact of which we should be aware.

Drawing from our Antiochus/Antichrist verses of Daniel chapter 11 we learn even more. We are led to believe that he is a liar (vs. 11:27). He will act “deceitfully” (vs. 11:23). “Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand” (Dan 8:25). He comes to power

in a devious manner, using flattery and deceit (Dan 11: 21). One of the things which we can use to identify the Antichrist will be this ability to deceive people through his words. He will corrupt many through “flattery” (Dan 11:32).

In fact, one of the most striking features of the Antichrist is his mouth. Right in the middle of this little horn is a big mouth. We are shown “a mouth speaking great things” (Rev 13:5). Also in Daniel we read about “a mouth which spoke pompous words” (Dan 7:20) and “in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words” (Dan 7:8). This horn has prominent eyes and does a lot of boastful talking.

Surprisingly, the popularity of the Antichrist is not great, since he will “become strong with a small number of people” (11:23). He is looked upon by many as being a “vile person” (vs 21). No cheering crowds crown him king. They do not give him “the honor of royalty” (vs 21).

Therefore, we should not be looking for someone who is liked and popular. This is a mistake which many make. Initially, the Antichrist will not be an outstanding figure on the world stage. In fact, he will be unpopular with many. The coming man of sin will, in the beginning, be a rather unknown and perhaps disliked person who likes to brag about what he will do.

A SEVERE ASCETIC

Many have supposed that since the Beast is called the “man of sin” that he would be an notably immoral, man-of-the-world sort of person. There is nothing in the scriptures which supports this. While other world leaders and famous people have become renowned for their sexual exploits, lovers, different wives, etc. nothing of this nature is said about the Antichrist. His sin is his rejection of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Even more than this, he begins to believe that he is God. He “opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (II Thess 2:4).

The Antichrist will not be a womanizer or an immoral person from a perspective of sexual impurity. In fact, it may be that he will preach his own brand of morality. We read that he will not regard “the desire of women” (Dan 11:37). It is possible that he will be a severe ascetic, priding himself in his extreme self-denial in the area of sexual relations.

This fact would not discount the possibility that he might be married, but may indicate that he arrives at a place where he has little use for his wife or wives. Whatever the case, it may be that the religion which he ultimately develops

will involve an extremely strong position of denial with regard to sexual involvement of men with women.

Bible scholars differ widely on the interpretation of this phrase “the desire of women.” Many and various opinions have been offered. Some have seen a rejection of the worship of various goddesses. Others synthesize a denial of Christ, thinking that the “desire of women” is Jesus. Still others postulate that this “desire of women” is to have children and that the Antichrist will be against this. However, none of this really rings true.

Now that we have clearly identified the area of the world from which the Antichrist will come, it is not at all difficult to imagine that he will espouse some form of asceticism. It might be that he would be involved in, or be a leader of, the current movement among some Muslims of radical, religious self-denial. It may be that his attitude toward women and their natural, human desires for self-expression and satisfaction is severe and repressive.

This group already has today an almost vicious reaction toward women and any sort of male/female interaction. Women are often treated as subhuman. Women’s desires, including the wish to be seen as attractive, to be educated and to have places of importance and responsibility in society are countered with the utmost ferocity by Islamic radicals.

The idea that this phrase refers to such a severe religious tendency gains a lot of support when we remember that it is the Antichrist and his ten nations who destroy Babylon. They hate her because of her rampant immorality, sensuality and self-indulgence (Rev 17:16,17). We will explore these things in more detail later, but for now I believe it is a good bet that he will be a prominent leader in an extreme, anti-Christian religious movement. This religion will probably be some form of Islam.

Some might argue that Islam is not anti-Christian. Well, certainly we must be able to agree that it is not pro-Christian. I am told that inside every mosque is a prominent sign which reads: "God has no son." This can only be considered anti-Christian, since the foundation of the Christian church is the profession that God indeed does have a Son.

Here I am not teaching any kind of hate against Muslims. Certainly God's attitude, and ours also, must be one of love for every man. However, it is obvious that the basic tenets of Mohammedism and real Christianity are in opposition to one another. There is no way to reconcile the two. Although Muslims concede that Jesus was a prophet, they deny that He was God's only begotten Son. This then puts them firmly in a position of being against New Testament truth which is that Jesus was much more than another prophet. He was God's Son.

The conflict of Islam with God's people – both the Jews and the Christians – is longstanding. Certainly Islam is a religious substitute for the true worship of the true God. It should be no surprise to discover that this false religion could play a prominent role in the rise and reign of the coming Antichrist.

THE "GOD OF FORTRESSES"

In Daniel 11, verse 38 we find an interesting detail about the Antichrist. He will: "...honor a god of fortresses, and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things."

It is not hard to imagine someone, perhaps like Osama bin Laden, coming to know this new god. He is a fugitive from the international community. He spends months and even years hiding in caves. He is an ascetic. He fasts often – so much in fact that he becomes emaciated, causing many to speculate that he must suffer from some kind of disease. This man has little contact with others and the outside world. He prays a lot, but not to the right God.

During this time of prayer, fasting and isolation it is possible that he would begin to have an awareness of a presence. He might have entered into contact with a spiritual force which begins to guide him and even speak to him. This force could become his protector. It is this

spirit which is keeping him from being found and killed, even though thousands of army soldiers, special forces, aerial drones, satellites and other devices are scouring the area for him. He has found a new god, one which guides and protects him in every way. It is his “god of fortresses.” This god becomes his stronghold.

This word “fortress” in Hebrew means “place or means of safety, protection, refuge, stronghold.” It is used many times in the Bible, over 37 times in fact, referring to a believer’s relationship with God. For example, we read that God is our refuge and our strength (Ps 46:1).

But the Antichrist has found a new refuge or stronghold. He has come into contact with a spirit being who protects him and so becomes his god. This protector of his becomes more and more real to him and begins to guide his words, thoughts and ways. The Antichrist, due to his geographic location, will probably refer to this new god as Allah. He will likely insist that this is the “real” Allah and that he himself is some kind of reincarnation of the “Prophet.”

But the truth is that this new god of his is Satan himself. The devil becomes the god of the Antichrist. We can confirm this from the verse in Revelation 13:2 where we read that the dragon (which in this case is Satan) “gave him [the Antichrist] his power, his throne, and great authority.”

Since the Antichrist worships this god, he will soon insist that everyone else does too. We read: "So they [the people of the world] worshiped the dragon [Satan] who gave authority to the beast..." (Rev 13:4). This is the god which becomes real to, protects and empowers the man of sin. Evidently, Satan sees this man as a someone whom he can use in the future to do his will on the earth.

Interestingly, this is not "the God [or gods] of his [the Antichrist's] fathers" (Dan 11:37). It is "a god [or gods] that his fathers did not know" (Dan 11:38). Again, taking Osama bin Laden as our example here, his father was probably also a Muslim. Perhaps he worshiped Allah in the way many so-called Christians worship God today. They give lip service to some deity whom they really do not know and who is not real to them.

But it is very probable that Osama's father was not a worshiper of the devil. He most likely was not, as the coming Antichrist will be, in communion with Satan himself. This protector, this "god of fortresses" was unknown to him.

Some might argue that Allah is just another name for the devil. Others think that the Mohammedans use it as a name for the true God but are in error in what they believe about Him. These are questions which are beyond the scope of our study here. I would only like to note that at some point in time, Osama rejected

his father's ways. He adopted a radical form of religion that did not harmonize with his parents' idea of who "God" is and what his ways were. He made a radical break with his father's religion and undoubtedly his father's concept of God.

By the way, some have taken the phrase "God of his fathers" and insisted that the coming Antichrist must be a Jew who rejects God. Others see him as a backslidden Christian. There is nothing in the text which demands this interpretation. The word for "God" here is "elohim" which can be but is not always a reference to the God of the Bible. It is a kind of generic Hebrew word for "God." It can also be rendered "god" or even "gods" since it is a plural word. Therefore, it can refer to any sort of deity or deities, even if they are pagan ones.

If the word "Jehovah" (Yahweh) or "Lord" (Adonai) had been used in this passage, this would have been a certain identification of the true God. But since "elohim" is used, this in no way demands the interpretation that the Antichrist be a Jew or Christian. (The translation "gods" has given rise to the possibility that the "god(s) of his fathers" refers to the ancient gods of Babylon and Assyria which the Antichrist will not worship.)

Instead of the "god [or gods] of his fathers," this evil person will promote the worship of his new god, which in reality is the devil. I think

that it is very unlikely that he will use the name "Satan" or "the devil" to describe his god. He will probably use the title "Allah," thus obscuring who this god really is.

But the truth of the matter is that the god whom he will promote is the ancient serpent, Satan. He will popularize this god with whom he is in communion and advocate the worship of him. In Daniel we are told that the Antichrist will honor this "god of fortresses," "acknowledge" it and "advance its glory" (Dan 11:38,39).

ANTICHRIST WILL DEMAND WORSHIP

But the coming Antichrist does not stop with merely worshipping a "new" god. As his power and influence grow, his head also swells up proportionately. His pride and ego begin to expand to an almost unprecedented extent. He begins to imagine that he too is god. He arrives at the place where he wants to be worshiped also. It appears that as the anointing of the devil becomes ever stronger in his life, this power goes to his head. Experiencing the authority of Satan and even sitting on his "throne" gives him a greatly inflated idea of who he is.

So the Antichrist will begin to demand worship of himself. We read that the man of sin "opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped" until finally, "he sits as God in the temple of God, showing

himself that he is God" (II Thess 2:4). No doubt the self-exaltation is related to the "mouth speaking great things" (Rev 13:5) and "speaking pompous words" (Dan 7:8). The Antichrist will, with time, become completely carried away with his successes and following.

Eventually, his opinion of himself will balloon to such a point that he will blaspheme the Most High God, verbally denigrating him and challenging His authority. "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High" (Dan 7:25). And: "Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven" (Rev 13:6). This will prove to be a great mistake.

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

We have been speaking to a small degree about Islam and how this will play a part in the coming of the Antichrist. To understand this, we must know that Islam today is not a unified movement. This religion is divided up into many different sects. Each has their own emphasis, beliefs and leaders. Over the centuries since its establishment, Islam has been changed many times by various charismatic leaders to suit their own purposes, giving rise to various factions and belief systems.

In one case, a sect of Islam actually transformed itself into another religion entirely, as

was the case with something called Bahaimism or Baabism. Therefore, the possibility of the Antichrist modifying and molding Islam to suit his own agenda is not very remote. It would be nothing new.

It is my guess that the Beast will use the Islamic religion as a springboard to gain followers but after he assumes a position of great authority and control, he will modify it to include himself and his actual protector (Satan) as objects of worship. His will probably be a kind of mutant Muslim religion.

In fact, some sects of Islam are actively expecting a kind of "savior" to show up and lead them back to their former unity and glory. There are many millions of Muslims today eagerly waiting for the arrival of an anointed, quasi-supernatural Imam or leader.

Dr. Javeed Akhten, who is the Executive Director of the International Strategy and Policy Institute of Chicago, Illinois, in his article entitled "Schisms and Heterodoxy Among Muslims" states: "Shia philosophy is...awaiting the return of the occulted Imam." Further he writes: "The 'Hizb ut Tahrir' is a relatively new group that has as its main goal the establishment of the Caliph (Khalifa) who will be the savior for the Muslims."

No doubt, the Antichrist will be happy to assume this position for them. It is very probable that the Antichrist will appear to the Muslim

community as a savior and a uniter. It is likely that many will welcome him as a fulfiller of this messianic role. Later, he will mold this religion to suit his own ends.

OSAMA BIN LADEN

Here I have suggested the name Osama bin Laden as a candidate for the Antichrist. Certainly, from this vantage point, no one can declare with certainty who the coming Antichrist will be. However, the readers should be aware that Osama is an individual who fits very nicely into our biblical understanding. He is also someone who is trying to position himself to take over a good part of the Middle East. He is a power hungry individual with enormous aspirations.

On the internet I found some excerpts from an interview with Paul Williams author of a book entitled *Osama's Revenge*. Mr. Williams says that Osama was born in 1957, making him about 48 years old today. This gives him plenty of time left in his life to develop his schemes. Further, Williams asserts: "Osama is almost always surrounded by fawning attendants who hail him not as 'Sultan'...or 'Emir'...but as 'awaited enlightened one,' the title reserved for Mahdi."

Williams goes on to explain that, according to some Muslims: "The Mahdi is the rightly

guided caliph who will appear during the last days of human history. His coming is foretold by the Haddith, the sacred teachings that supplement the Quran. In such writings, the Mahdi is depicted as the figure who will bring forth the 'Day of Islam,' when all the people throughout the world – believers and unbelievers alike – will fall in submission before the throne of Allah."

Continuing on, Williams asserts: "Bin Laden possesses the distinguishing marks of the Mahdi" (evidently referring to some physical characteristics which the coming Mahdi will have) "the high forehead, the prominent nose, the gap between his teeth, and the black mole on his face. He (Osama) is pleased to point out these features to photographers and reporters from al-Jazeera and other Arabic news outlets."

Many will no doubt argue that the international community would never tolerate Osama taking over any nations in the Middle East. They would throw their might and military power against him to try to destroy him.

Probably they would try to do just that. But you must remember who the Antichrist's protector is. He is the "god of fortresses." This spirit being, who is the "ruler of this world" (Jn 14:30) will, with all his power, protect the Antichrist from assaults. He will be his impregnable fortress. It will be virtually impossible to kill anyone with this kind of protection.

Just as an example, remember how many times the U.S. attempted to assassinate Fidel Castro? They also tried to get Muammar Qaddafi, but without success. Many such leaders seem to have an uncanny knack for escaping and avoiding all attempts on their lives. The Antichrist will have an extremely powerful, satanic anointing of protection around him.

Still another factor which the reader must consider is that God Himself is planning to use the Antichrist. He will use him for various purposes, including carrying out divine judgment on Babylon (Rev 17:17,18). So, it is logical that God too will be protecting the Antichrist from whoever would try to destroy him, until he has carried out His plans. With so much supernatural protection, the Antichrist will be hard to kill!

This author is not insisting that Osama bin Laden will actually be the coming Antichrist. Please do not jump to this conclusion. He may be long gone before the end of this age comes.

I would only like to point out that he is someone who has ambitions to become just such a leader. He has notoriety, money and followers. He is extremely popular with the radical segment of the Muslim populations in the world today. Therefore, he is a very likely candidate whom we should watch. However, if he is killed or does not succeed with his desires, there are thousands of other radicals very much like him waiting in line to take his place.

THE FALSE PROPHET

To aid him in his rise to power and “deity” the Antichrist seems to have a kind of helper or prophet. This figure acts perhaps as a sort of vice-president. It is possible that the Beast himself keeps to the background and allows this false prophet to front for him, especially in the area of claiming to be deity. We read that this figure “...causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast” (Rev 13:12).

Further assisting this prophet in proclaiming that the Beast is divine, are his miracles. He is permitted by God and energized by Satan to perform incredible miracles. This second beast “...performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast” (Rev 13:13,14).

Perhaps you have often thought of this second beast or false prophet as just an individual. But biblically, he must be much more than that. He must also be a ruler of some nation. This is shown to us by the fact that he is called a “beast.” In Bible prophecy, both in Daniel and Revelation, any beast which appears is always the leader of a kingdom.

In *all* the other visions, a beast is representative of both a kingdom and its ruler. Therefore, for the false Prophet or second beast to be a simple individual without a nation behind him would be inconsistent with the rest of the scriptures. The false Prophet must be the ruler of some country. This is an important sign.

Not only is the second beast a national leader, but it seems that he must be a joint ruler together with someone else. We read that this second beast has “two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon” (Rev 13:11). If you remember our previous discussion of the meaning of horns in Bible prophecy, you will recall that two horns on a beast represent two simultaneous rulers. Therefore, to be consistent, this second beast must be some kind of co-ruler of a nation.

Although this may seem a little strange to you, we might find something like this in our world today. The nation of Iran, for example, seems to have a dual governmental system with two rulers. They have their religious government with its Ayatollah or spiritual ruler alongside of a secular government with its ruler or president. This would give us two “horns.”

Perhaps the scriptures are indicating this very kind of arrangement. Therefore, we might be wise to keep our eyes on the developing situation in Iran, both on its leadership and on its nuclear development program. With the passage of time, these things will become clearer.

It could be that the nation which the false prophet leads would be part of the ten which the Antichrist will eventually unite. Yet this would not be scripturally necessary. It is only important that it exists and that one of its rulers becomes a very active participant in the dominion of the Antichrist. It seems quite likely that it will be a nation which is dominated by radical Muslims. Perhaps they will see the Antichrist as someone they can use to push their agendas.

ANTICHRIST'S RESURRECTION

Still another factor which will promote the coming beast worship is what some have termed a "false resurrection." Evidently, the Antichrist is not popular with everyone. Sometime along the way, someone tries to kill him.

For a while the Antichrist will be invulnerable. Due to his supernatural protection, no one will be able to get to him. Yet, eventually someone will succeed in wounding him, probably fatally. It seems that this will be a head wound. We read: "I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded."

But this isn't the end of him or his kingdom. Somehow, this "deadly wound was healed." The result of this return from death is that "all the world marveled and followed the beast" (Rev 13:3).

It is very possible that this miraculous healing is a result of the devil's power. It is probably Satan who cures this Beast. Certainly such an amazing revival from the dead would cause people, especially Muslim religious people who are seeking such things, to be amazed.

It would increase the Antichrist's esteem in their eyes and serve to allay any doubts that they might have had. This "resurrection" from the dead, no matter how it is accomplished, will strongly work in the Beast's favor. It will give him a kind of supernatural aura of power and invincibility.

This gives rise to another thought. After the Antichrist is wounded, it is possible that the devil himself enters into his body, thus effecting some kind of cure. This might possibly coincide with the time when Satan is finally thrown out of heaven to the earth (Rev 12:9,13). This then could be how this false resurrection is accomplished.

Another possibility is that at this time the spirit of Antiochus Epiphanes is retrieved from wherever it happens to be and inhabits this body. Whatever actually occurs, this wound and its healing only serve to promote the popularity of the Beast.