

I. Introduction

- A. Today is part three of our series called EndGame. We are studying what the Bible says about the end times. This is called Eschatology — the study of how Jesus returns and the world ends.
- B. Last time, like all good puzzle builders, we started with the outside edge, the frame. God has made some promises. And because some of those promises have not been fulfilled in the past, they must be fulfilled in the future. These promises are packaged in covenants, which form the frame around Bible prophecy.
- C. There will be a nation called Israel. There will be a king who rules there. There will be a kingdom of God on earth. There will be a millennium — a thousand years — of utopia on earth under the personal, visible, literal rulership of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because with God, every promise is a prophecy, because God keeps his Word. What God promises, God delivers.
- D. This is the opposite of the devil. Because with the devil, you never know what you're going to get. Because the devil overpromises and under-delivers. There's a reason for this — there's a reason he under delivers. God is omnipotent; the devil is not. He is finite, he is not omnipotent like God.
- E. Today I want to talk about the *Antichrist*. The Antichrist is a leading character in Bible prophecy. He goes by many names in the Bible. He is talked about in many places in the Bible.
- F. You cannot talk about the Antichrist without talking about the devil. The reason for this is simple. The person we call the antichrist is the closest thing the devil can ever have to an incarnation.
 1. Jesus is God incarnate, literally.
 2. The Antichrist is Satan incarnate, not literally — it's more like demon possession.
- G. So I hope you're all prayed up, because today's message has a bit of a creep-factor to it.
- H. And one more word about my method. When we piece together the Bible to make a teaching, we have to be really careful. Because anybody can piece together disconnected bits of the Bible and make it say anything. That's the danger.
- I. Every piece only gets to contribute what the piece means in context. So one of the things I'm doing in this series is taking larger sections of Scripture, and showing end times truth, not in pieces, but in the extended teaching of Scripture. Why? Because this is what grown ups do when they interpret the Bible.
- J. So first, a little teaching on the devil, and then a lot of teaching on the Antichrist.

II. Satan

- A. *What: Satan is a fallen angel.*
 1. God is uncreated. Satan is created. When he was created, he was the most beautiful and glorious of angels. He was the chief angels, of all the myriads of angels God made. He was musical, powerful, glorious, and beautiful, all under the rule and reign of God.
- B. *Motive: Satan's motive is to be LIKE God.*
 1. This is really important. It's important because most people think the opposite. They expect him to be unlike God. Evil. Nasty. Horrible. Dark. Fangs. Pitchfork. Horns and tail. They expect dark and despicable and vile and horrible.
 2. So they let down the guard, and in walks Satan - handsome and caring, and helpful and kind. And he worms his way right into their thinking.
- C. *Scripture:*
 1. *How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'* (Isaiah 14:12-14)
 - a) There it is: Satan's motive is, was, and always will be to be like the Most High. He looked at the throne of heaven, and saw the Blessed Trinity — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — and said, "Move over guys! There's room for one more." I will be just like God.
 - b) But he can't be like God. God is infinite and uncreated. Lucifer is finite and created. God is non-contingent being, meaning his continuance depends on no one or nothing; Lucifer is contingent being, meaning the only reason he exists is because God made him and sustains him.
 - c) He could never be like God. He could never create a good world. He could never create a just society. But that won't stop him from trying. His pride is epic, and his arrogance is beyond measure.
 - d) I guess he took one too many selfies.
 - e) So, question. If you are the devil, and if you are dedicated to replacing God... when you come into this world, how will you present yourself? Will you present yourself as a horrible, scary, slasher movie, or will you present yourself as an alluring, seductive, wise, and sensible alternative to God?
 2. And no wonder! *For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.* (2 Corinthians 11:14)
 3. You cannot let down your guard.
 4. One more thing about Satan, and then the Antichrist.
- D. *Some Names:*
 1. *Lucifer — bright light (Isaiah 14:12)*
 2. *Satan — Hebrew for Adversary (Matthew 4:10)*

3. Devil — Greek for Adversary (Matthew 4:1)
4. God of this World (2 Corinthians 4:4)
5. The Prince of this World (John 12:31)
6. The Old Serpent (Revelation 12:9)
7. Demons — not the devil, fallen angels (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7-9)
 - a) The angels who sided with Lucifer in a failed coup, and are now fallen angels.
 - b) There is one devil and there are many demons.

- E. Let me just bring this home. There is more to this world than you can see with your eyes, or scientists can measure with their devices.
 1. *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God... (Ephesians 6:12,13a).*
- F. There's your life. There's your life as it really is. We are escaping the Matrix today.
- G. So enough about the devil.

III. The Antichrist

- A. So who is the Antichrist? The Bible teaches that, just before the Lord returns, a major player will emerge on the world scene. This major player will be extraordinarily powerful. He will have enormous influence on politics and government. And he will promise utopia and not deliver, and then cancel his promise, and then he will unmask himself and rule by force.
- B. This is the coming Antichrist. Like I said, he is the closest thing the devil has to an incarnation. If Jesus is coming soon — and nobody knows when that will be — but if he is coming soon, then the Antichrist is already walking around on earth. He may already be involved in world politics and global governance, who knows?
- C. Well, God knows, and there is a ton of teaching in the Bible about this person.
- D. So we are going to look at two paragraphs in the Bible, and then I am going to try to pull it all together.

IV. *Do not love the world [kosmos] or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. (1 John 2:15-18)*

- A. We can learn a lot of things here, but let's focus on a few. The core sentence is really simple: "The Antichrist is coming." Put that on a t-shirt, and warn the world. So that's the first thing. The Bible teaches, and Christians believe, that a literal person is coming into the world one day who will arise on the world stage that God calls the Antichrist.
- B. The second thing to learn here is the word antichrist itself. This word has two parts, Christ — which is a name and a title for Jesus — plus the prefix anti-. In English, anti- means against. So he is against Christ. But that's not hitting the nail exactly on the head. Because this was written in Christ, and in Greek, the prefix anti- means "instead of." Get that. He is the instead of Christ. If you were going to make counterfeit money, you would make it as close to the real thing as possible. And if the devil is going to make a counterfeit Christ, he will make him as close to the real Christ as possible. Those who worship the Antichrist will not feel like they're worshipping the devil, they will feel like they are worshipping God. It takes great spiritual maturity to tell the difference! Don't be deceived.
- C. The third thing we can notice here is the way the Antichrist deceives people. The way he deceives people with "the world". Do not love the world or the things in the world. This word means "secular philosophy." The way the world thinks is antithetical to the way God thinks, and it is therefore antithetical to God. Secular philosophies are all opposed to God, even when they seem good, even when they feel good, even when they do good. So the main way the Antichrist will try to worm his way into people's lives is through a philosophy called worldliness. He will get them to buy into a philosophy that looks good, makes sense, feels good, and is straight from the pit of hell. We need to grow up so we can discern these things.
- D. The last lesson I'd like to take from this paragraph is that there are already many antichrists scurrying around our culture like cockroaches. There will be one Antichrist, capital A. And there are many antichrists, small a.
 1. These are the professors in the universities who undermine the faith of impressionable students - antichrists.
 2. These are the politicians who glory in an obscene desecration of the sanctify of life - antichrists.
 3. These are the entertainers who brainwash a generation into making sex meaningless, who degrade moral boundaries, and deform tender identities. Minions of the Antichrist.
 4. These are the religious leaders and pastors who substitute new revelations for the fixed revelation of God's inerrant Word. These are pastors who send congregations on a quest for a fleeting emotional high devoid of eternal and transcendent truth. Many antichrists.
 5. These are people like you and me and anyone, whenever we fall lockstep into society's lies that are taking us down an accelerating path of societal self-destruction.
 6. These minions of Antichrist are everywhere. Like cockroaches.
 - a) *It is not the reason of man, but the revelation of God, which points out that governments, morals, education, art, commercialism, vast enterprises and organizations, and much of religious activity are included in the cosmos diabolicus. That is, the system which Satan has constructed includes all the good which he can incorporate into it and be consistent in*

the thing he aims to accomplish. A serious question arises whether the presence of gross evil in the world is due to Satan's intention to have it so, or whether it indicates Satan's inability to execute all he has designed. The probability is great that Satan's ambition has led him to undertake more than any creature could ever administer. (Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, vol 2, pp. 99-102)

7. Do you get what this means? It means there is a lot of good in this world that is actually satanic. Yes. Let it sink in. There is actually satanic good in the world. And many Christians are working hard to help make it happen! Fools.
 - a) *Revelation declares that the whole cosmos-system must be annihilated--not its evil alone, but all that is in it, both good and bad. God will incorporate nothing of Satan's failure into that Kingdom which He will set up in the earth. (Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, vol 2, pp. 99-102).*

V. Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians

- A. *Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. (2 Thessalonians 2:1,2)*
 1. So Paul is writing a letter. He is writing a letter to a group of churches. These churches are in the Greek town called Thessalonica. Apparently there were Christians there who were freaking out. Why? Because they thought the second coming already happened and they missed it. So Paul writes to a) tell them to chill out, and b) instruct them.
 2. For now, let's just say that the Day of Christ is a title for the whole complex of last days events — especially the judgments at the end. So Paul says some things have to happen first:
- B. *Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition. (2 Thessalonians 2:3)*
 1. First there is the falling away. Some interpret this as a great departure from historic, biblical Christianity among all of society and even the church... something that I think is already happening.
 2. Others make a case, and I think a decent case, that this word "falling away" can also be translated "departure." They say it is referring to the Rapture... which we are not talking about today. IF that is the case, then the Day of Christ doesn't happen till after the Rapture, but don't get hung up here.
 3. Because we need to get hung up here:
 - a) The Man of Sin is revealed, the Son of Perdition.
 4. That is the Antichrist unveiled. He is the Man of Sin, no matter how good he appears. He is the Son of Perdition, which means Destruction, no matter how loving he appears. He is a devil-inspired human wrecking ball.
 5. There are about 20 different names and titles of the Antichrist in the Bible... here's a sample:
 - a) The Lawless One - 2 Thessalonians 2:8
 - b) The Son of Perdition (Destruction) - 2 Thessalonians 2:8
 - c) The Beast - Revelation 11:7
 - d) The Little Horn - Daniel 7,8
 - e) The False Christ, Matthew 24:24
 6. And people will LOVE him.
- C. *...who 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. (2 Thessalonians 2:4)*
 1. So this reminds us of the goal: a substitute God. A substitute God, with a substitute Savior, with a substitute Bible (the humanist, secular agenda) and a substitute morality. *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).*
 2. Showing that he is God. This has always been the global agenda of the devil, and of the Antichrist, and of the many antichrist's who've swallowed the devil's pill.
- D. *Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. (2 Thessalonians 2:5-7)*
 1. This talks about the devil and the Antichrist being restrained. Basically the devil is on a leash right now. It's a long leash, but he is restrained. One day, he will be let off his leash. That is when the Antichrist appears. This will be the world period ever on planet earth, and it is called the Tribulation, and we will talk about it next time.
 2. But the seeds of that awful period are already planted and taking root. How do we know?
 3. Because "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work." This is spiritual anarchy. Spiritual anarchy spills into moral anarchy. Moral anarchy spills into sexual anarchy, and political anarchy, and every kind of lawlessness you can imagine and beyond.
 4. What is holding it back? Two things: the Holy Spirit and the Bible-believing church are still operating in the world. When those two things go away, all hell breaks loose with the Antichrist at the helm. That's the idea here.
- E. *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8)*

1. Yet another title for the Antichrist. He throws off God's laws, which is like throwing off the laws of physics. You can't break God's laws, you can only break yourself against God's laws. And that is what will happen beyond measure in the Tribulation. All the world will bash itself against God's truth, and will find out that God's truth is an unbreakable rock.
2. What does God do? He blows the Antichrist away.
3. Victory is certain. But until then, victory is uncertain:
- F. *The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:9,10)*
 1. Do you know what the Antichrist will be very good at? And do you know what the mini-antichrists are very good at? Signs and wonders. But they are deceptive signs and wonders.
 2. And there are certain people who are suckers for this stuff: they did not receive the love of the truth.
 3. Fact: if you don't love your Bible, you don't love God's truth. Which I would follow up with the most gracious period I could place. The only place to find salvation is in Christ, and the only place to find Christ is in the Bible, which puts forth a Savior, crucified and risen again.
- G. *And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:11,12)*
 1. Whenever you see something so evil, or so foolish in the news, that you can't believe it, I want you to say to yourself the words "strong delusion."
 - a) Delusion means a state of firmly maintaining irrational positions, or firmly maintaining counterfactual positions. Welcome to America.
 - b) Strong delusion means the machinery of error is at work in them.
 2. They believe the lie. What lie? The lie of "good without God" which is the official motto of the American Humanist Society. Good without God. Why? Because Satan likes Good, and he hates God. He's trying as hard as he can.
 3. Two quick things:
 - a) Why would God send strong delusion? Why God? Answer? Because God gives people what they ask for when he knows they're not going to ask for anything else.
 - b) Second, notice the end... this is a tug of war between two powerful forces. It is a tug of war between truth vs. dysfunctional pleasure. God is for human pleasure. He created pleasure. Heaven is a place of ultimate pleasure.
 4. But when pleasure collides with truth, truth must win. Any pleasure that breaks truth is always fleeting and in the end will only break your heart.
 5. The Antichrist will come. He will arise during a distinct period of history called the Tribulation... and that is something we will talk about next time we are together.
 6. But have no fear — we know who wins in the end, right?
- VI. Conclusion
 - A. When we study Bible prophecy, it is possible to get lost in details and theories and arguments. All those things definitely need to have a place in our thinking. But, in the final analysis, our heart should resonate with two great realities. One is that we cannot help but be awed by the wisdom, power, and love of God in these things. Christ will reign in majesty, and we will, in him, experience the fulness of joy.
 - B. Praise God, he is coming again.