

SPECIAL INTERLUDE: A PROPHECY TRILOGY FOR OUR ERA

Part II: God's Comforting Insight On The Antichrist And His Mark

(Revelation 13:1-18 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Two Church members have reported that due to the unsettling COVID-19 pandemic and recent election, views have been circulating that lead people they know to think and act in unedifying ways. To address this need, we are taking an interlude in our trek through the Bible to give three sermons on relevant Bible prophecies.

A lot of evangelicals have become upset about end-time events due to a film involving Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, Reverend Franklin Graham and MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell and others that came out before the election in which "(e)vangelical and social conservatives, supporters of President Trump," warned "of a 'one world government' based on socialism, the rise of the anti-Christ and other end-time calamities if Mr. Trump was not reelected . . ." (Christopher Vondracek, "Film warns of 'one world government,' rise of anti-Christ if Trump isn't reelected," June 22, 2020; washingtontimes.com) When Joe Biden then ended up as president, stories circulated on the Internet like Stephen Ryan's piece, "The Antichrist Spirit Has Arrived: President Joe Biden's Most Revolutionary Bill: Equality Act abolishes biological sexes" (February 24, 2021; mysticpost.com) and "(a) pastor" in South Florida warned "his congregation about the 'mark of the beast'" and "images of horned beasts with microchips being inserted inside people's bodies with syringes" being "projected on a big screen behind him." (Lautauro Grinspan, "'Mark of the devil': Some Hispanic pastors contribute to vaccine skepticism in Miami," February 11, 2021; miamiherald.com)

On top of this, many evangelicals worry about unsaved people they know if the rapture were to occur in the near future and their family and friends would be left facing the Antichrist and his "mark of the beast"!

Need: So we ask, "With so much concern today over the Antichrist and his mark, what does God have to say?!"

- I. First, we repeat what we taught in our last sermon, that 2 Thessalonians 2:1-14 claims God will take us believers in Christ to heaven in the Rapture before the Antichrist is ever revealed and comes to power!**
- II. Then, AFTER we are in heaven, the Antichrist and his "mark" will be revealed and function as follows:**
 - A. Daniel 9:26 claims the "people of the prince *that shall come*" (*haba'*, Qal masculine part. with def. art.; Kittel, *Bib. Heb.*, p. 1277; *The Analyt. Heb. & Chal. Lex.* (Zon.), 1972, p. 161) would destroy the Jerusalem temple in A. D. 70, which people were the Romans, and the prince to come is the prince in Daniel 9:27 who as the Antichrist will make a 7-year treaty with Israel -- the 7-year Great Tribulation Period. Thus, the Antichrist will be a European male man of the Revived Roman Empire. (*Ryrie St. Bible, KJV*, 1978, ftn. to Dan. 9:26)
 - B. He will gain power by uprooting 3 of the 10 kings who will then rule the Revived Roman Empire, Dan. 7:8.
 - C. In the middle of his 7-year treaty period with Israel, the middle of the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist will break the treaty, set himself up as God in the Jewish temple and try to destroy Israel, Dan. 9:27; Rev. 12:7-17.
 - D. The Antichrist will greatly blaspheme God, persecute those who trust in Christ after the rapture, think to change dates and the law and rule in great wickedness in the last half of the Great Tribulation, Dan. 7:24-25.
 - E. He will exalt himself above all gods, not respect his fathers' god or the Messiah Who is "the desire of women," he will not respect traditions or heritages and he will worship military power and activity, Daniel 11:36-39.
 - F. The Satan-empowered Antichrist will perform lying wonders and signs to gain a following, 2 Thess. 2:3-9.
 - G. Satan's empowering of the Antichrist will climax in his faking the death and resurrection of the Antichrist to rival Christ's true death and resurrection so as to deceive the world to follow the Antichrist, Revelation 13:3-4.
 - H. Satan will raise up a false prophet to endorse the Antichrist by calling fire down from heaven, Rev. 13:11-14a.
 - I. The false prophet will cause the world to create an image of the Antichrist and he will then animate the image, enabling it to speak, and he will order everyone to worship the image or be executed, Revelation 13:14b-15.
 - J. Also, the false prophet will cause everyone to receive the mark of the number 666 on their right hand or forehead, the "mark of the beast," that is, the mark of the Antichrist, to be able to buy or sell, Rev. 13:16-18.
- III. At Christ's Coming at the end of the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist and false prophet will be captured and cast into the lake of fire where they will be tormented day and night forever, Rev. 19:11-20; 20:10.**
- IV. However, during the Great Tribulation, God will provide opportunity for people worldwide to be saved:**
 - A. God's angels will seal so as to protect from harm 144,000 Hebrew men who believe in Christ soon after the rapture of the Church so they can safely spread the Gospel of salvation to people worldwide, Revelation 7:1-8.
 - B. The Lord will also raise up the Hebrew high priest and prime minister who believe in Christ right after the rapture to evangelize world governments, Rev. 11:3-14 with Zech. 4:3-14; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, ftn. to Zech. 4:14.

- V. As a result, all who do not trust in Christ but receive the Antichrist's mark will end up in the lake of fire, having no rest, but being tormented by fire and brimstone day and night for ever and ever, Rev. 14:9-11.
- VI. On the other hand, many people will study Old and New Testament prophecies to understand their era (Dan. 12:4; Matt. 13:52), many will trust in Christ, the Antichrist will kill many of them, but Christ will raise them at the start of the Millennial Kingdom so that they will rule with Him, Rev. 7:9-17; 20:1-4.

Lesson: *Though the Antichrist and his mark will come on the world scene after the rapture of the Church, many people worldwide will still be saved by faith in Christ in the Great Tribulation Period. However, many of those believers will be martyred, but Christ will raise them at His Second Coming that they might reign with Him.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) May we take comfort in Scripture's prediction that the Antichrist and his mark will be revealed AFTER Christ takes the true Church to heaven. In so doing, (3) may we be comforted in our hope of the Pretribulation Rapture and may we continue to be stable, serving the Lord.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We have implied in this sermon that Satan is now free and will yet commit great evils and that the unsaved will suffer conscious, relentless, eternal torment in the lake of fire. However, these beliefs are opposed by some evangelicals who teach that (1) Satan is now bound in the bottomless pit, unable to afflict us since we allegedly are now experiencing the Revelation 20:1-6 Millennial reign of Christ (Amillennialism) and that (2) there allegedly is no eternal torment for the unsaved, that Jesus' word "Gehenna" for "hell" referred to Jerusalem's city dump at Gehenna.

We thus cite some Scripture passages on Satan and the lake of fire in support of our beliefs (as follows):

(1) On Satan's current status, (a) 1 John 5:19b as translated from the Greek text states, ". . . (T)he whole world [currently] *is lying* in the power of (*keitai*, present tense of *keimai*, "find oneself, be, lie in the power of," The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 227; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 427-428) the evil one" (*en to ponero*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 825), "the evil one" being Satan. (b) 1 Peter 5:8b-9 ESV states, ". . . Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world." (c) Paul in Romans 16:20a ESV states, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." (d) James 4:7b ESV states, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Satan is not now bound in the bottomless pit, but active worldwide, so we are not in the Millennial Kingdom as Amillennialists teach, but we are in the Revelation 2:1-3:22 Church era!

(2) On the lake of fire being a place where the unsaved will experience conscious, relentless, eternal torment, (a) Revelation 14:9-11 ESV states, "And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast [Antichrist] and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.'" (b) Revelation 20:12, 15 ESV states, "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books . . . And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (c) Luke 16:22b-31 ESV states, ". . . The rich man . . . died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.' And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house -- for I have five brothers -- so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" The unsaved will thus suffer relentless torment forever in the lake of fire.

May we NOW trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we Christians then take comfort in God's promise of the Pretribulation Rapture that we will not face the Great Tribulation and the Antichrist or his mark, and may we in stability keep serving Christ!