

THE COMING ANTICHRIST: JESUS OF NAZARETH?



Is the world on the brink of the most serious case of mistaken identity in all of history?



Why This Booklet Was Written

This booklet was written by William and James Farrar, two Christadelphians who are persuaded that certain popular ideas about Antichrist and his future influence are misguiding many religious people. This booklet represents an urgent appeal to the student of the Bible to re-examine the widely accepted view with a desire to find the truth. The serious issue raised in the following pages merits careful thought, for it may well determine who is Christ's at His imminent coming.

1st printing — 1977
2nd printing — 1981
3rd printing — 1990
4th printing --- 1992

The Coming Antichrist: Jesus of Nazareth?

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Part I: A Tragic Case of Mistaken Identity?

*Why do the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel
together, against the LORD and against his Christ . . . He that
sitteth in the heavens shall laugh . . . Yet I have set my king upon
my holy hill of Zion. (Psalm 2:1,2,4,6)*

A most interesting aspect of this prophetic Psalm is that the opening inquiry of the writer is left unanswered. His searching question concerns the reason why the peoples of the earth are hostile to Christ when he returns to subject the earth to his benevolent rule. The word used in the query, "vain", means "having no real substance". The distinct implication of the question is that the world has imagined something that is not true, that its leaders are deceived in some way. In this work a possible reason for the opposition to Christ, which it is believed is related to the "vain" idea those opposing him will hold, is advanced. It is the sincere desire on the part of those producing this pamphlet to inform the public as to the nature of the expectations of many modern Bible students, and the possible consequences that these views may ultimately have when Jesus returns to this earth. By becoming acquainted with the evidence, the reader will hopefully then be in a better position to form his own opinion on the validity or invalidity of the ideas being put forth respecting future events.

In recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in interest within christian circles as to what the Bible reveals about the course history will follow. One of the most prominent beliefs to emerge is the conviction that a single man will arise, the Antichrist, who will personally fulfil many prophecies in the Bible. With many this idea has become a basic tenet of their faith. An almost feverish anticipation has developed, fueled by a continuing stream of books and films, that this individual will soon appear in Jerusalem, demand to be worshipped and revered as a god, and quickly ascend to the position of supreme world dictator. There is almost complete agreement that these events are nearly upon us. This presents a very sobering and arresting challenge to the reader. Where will he give his loyalty when this personage manifests himself? Could it be, is there even a remote possibility, that Christ himself could be mistakenly identified as the Antichrist? Could the most serious blunder of history be the opposing of the real Christ as the fabricated Antichrist? Lest the reader dismiss the suggestion out of hand, we beg him to compare what the Scriptures reveal concerning Christ at his second coming on the one hand, with what many christian expositors believe this evil despot, Antichrist, will do, on the other.

The Supposed Future Antichrist of Popular Expositions

1. Antichrist will appear suddenly.

“The way in which this dictator is going to step onto the stage of history will be dramatic. Overnight he will become the byword of the world. He is going to be distinguished as supernatural . . .”¹

2. Antichrist himself, or his chief cohort, the False Prophet, will be a Jew.

“This person (The False Prophet), who is called the second beast, is going to be a Jew. Many believe he will be from the tribe of Dan, which is one of the tribes of the original progenitors of the nation of Israel.”²

“Several other items lead Bible students to conclude that antichrist will be a Jew. It is hard to believe that Israel would receive a Gentile Messiah. No Gentile could pose as Christ with any success.”³

3. Antichrist will claim that he is the Messiah of Israel.

“The antichrist will actually pose as the Messiah, he will claim Messianic titles and privileges . . . The antichrist is a person who will attempt to convince Israel that he is their long-anticipated Messiah.”⁴

The Christ of the Scriptures At His Appearing

1. Christ will appear suddenly.

“For as a snare shall it (his coming) come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.” (Luke 21:35)

2. Jesus is a Jew.

“Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” (Matt. 2:2)

Among Christ’s immediate rulers will be Jews — the twelve apostles. “Ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Matt. 19:28)

3. Jesus will exercise his appointed office of Messiah.

“I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.” (Ezek. 21:27)

“And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and

of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:33)

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” (Zech. 12:10)

4. Antichrist will perform miracles.

“With (sic) the counterfeit christ arrives, he will perform miracles in order to convince Israel that he is the prophet like Moses. The man of sin sits as a priest in the temple and engages in a prophetic ministry.”⁵

“In other words, Satan himself is going to give him fantastic power. He is going to be able to work all kinds of miracles. This is one reason that Christians should not get too excited when they see a miracle. It may not be a miracle from God. Satan is a miracle worker . . .”⁶

5. Antichrist will reside in Jerusalem.

“Jerusalem . . . the capital and centre of the world dicta-

4. Christ will perform miracles.

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert.” (Isaiah 35:5,6)

(Note: At the first coming of Christ, the prevalent opinion was that there was some external being, Beelzebub, prince of the devils, who was responsible for the miracles of Jesus. (Matt. 12:24) This belief in some external personage of evil pervades modern christendom today; and it is easy to see from the quote opposite to what agency the miracles of Christ at his second advent could be ascribed.)

5. Jesus will rule from Jerusalem.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets . . .

tor's (i.e. Antichrist's) rule . . .”

Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Luke 13:34,35)

“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” (Psalm 2:6)

“For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:3)

6. Antichrist will rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem and be involved with the service therein.

“The Antichrist will deify himself — just like the Caesars did. He will proclaim himself to be God. He will demand that he be worshipped and will establish himself in the temple of God. (2 Thess. 2:4) There is only one place where this temple of God can be and that is on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, on the site where the Dome of the Rock and other Moslem shrines now stand. There are many places in the Bible that pinpoint this location as the one where the Jews will rebuild their Temple.”⁸

“The Israelis will then be permitted to reinstitute the sacrifice and offering aspect of the law of Moses. This demands that the Temple be rebuilt, because according to the law of Moses, sacrifices can only be offered in the Temple at Jerusalem. Apparently all this will be done under the

6. Jesus will rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem and be involved with the service therein.

“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord . . .” (Acts 15:16,17)

“Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” (Zech. 6:12,13)

protection of the Antichrist of Rome. (P.S. The Arabs are not going to like this idea of rebuilding the Temple one bit).”⁹

7. Antichrist will form a covenant with the Jews.

“The Romans under Titus did the destroying, so the coming prince would have to be someone out of the Roman culture . . . (Others say that Antichrist must be a Jew, rather than someone of the Roman culture — see point 2 above. This shows the immense amount of unsubstantiated speculation that has been done.) This Roman prince will come to power just before the return of Christ. He will make ‘a strong covenant’ with the Israelis, guaranteeing their safety and protection. The word translated ‘strong covenant’ has the idea of a treaty or mutual protection pact.”¹⁰

“It will be a covenant which will permit Israel to continue and renew her religious ceremonies including the building of a Jewish temple, and the re-activation of Jewish sacrifices.”¹¹

7. Jesus will be a great leader and will re-introduce the Jews into God’s true everlasting covenant.

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.” (Romans 11:26,27)

“Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” (Isaiah 55:3,4)

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.” (Jeremiah 31:31)

“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king . . .” (Hosea 3:4,5)

8. Antichrist will somehow defeat Russia when it attacks Israel.

“With the world balance of power dramatically in his favour and the world dazzled by Russia’s defeat (in its attempt to invade Israel) the Antichrist will show his true colours. He will declare himself world dictator and move to crush all opposition.”¹²

9. Antichrist’s rule will commence with a proclamation and those who refuse to submit to it will be crushed.

“Ironically, the Mediterranean leader will begin his world government by proclamation. Using his consolidated position of power in the Middle East, **he will promise a new day of peace** and prosperity for all who recognize his leadership . . . This man’s absolute control politically, economically, and religiously will give him power **such as no man has ever had in human history**. His brilliance as a leader will be superhuman for he will be dominated and directed by Satan himself. But during his 3-1/2 year rule, he will ruthlessly crush all opposition.”¹³ (Emphasis added)

8. Russia will be defeated by the power of Almighty God at a time very close to, if not coincident with, Christ’s return to commence his rule on earth.

“Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezek. 38:23)

The Bible clearly teaches that God, and not a human agency will destroy Russia when it moves south; the idea that some individual will do this is totally foreign to scripture.

9. Christ’s rule will commence with a proclamation and those who refuse to submit to it will be crushed.

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Rev. 14:6,7)

“And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off . . .” (Micah 4:3)

“To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their

kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints.” (Psalm 149:7-9)

See also Daniel 2:44; 7:14; Psalm 72:7,11

The reader may well reflect at this juncture, “I see clearly the possibility that due to the remarkable similarity between what Jesus will do at his Second Coming and what this supposed Antichrist, according to many writers, would do, that a case of mistaken identity could certainly result: Jesus could very definitely be opposed for the reason that many think him to be this very Antichrist that they had been told about. Two questions do arise, however: (1) By what authority is it stated that these expositions of a Coming Antichrist are not sound? (2) Surely it is not being implied that good christian people, many of them currently holding this Antichrist view, will be among those deceived, if the above hypothesis is, in fact, true? Is the writer unaware that the Rapture will occur just prior to the manifestation of this Antichrist (according to present day expositions) and that they will be in heaven with Jesus during the reign of the Antichrist, and therefore could not *possibly* be deceived?”

The response to these eminently reasonable queries is as follows: (1) The entire basis for this Antichrist view is founded upon an interpretation of a portion of Daniel 9 — the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. This particular view was championed by Sir Robert Anderson in his book *The Coming Prince*, first published in 1881. This interpretation is discussed in detail in the second portion of this pamphlet.

Question (2) above involves of necessity a detailed discussion of another widely held tenet of faith, namely that an event known as “The Rapture” (or “The Great Snatch”, as one evangelical writer termed it) is soon going to occur. What is this “Rapture”, as it is commonly conceived, and upon what is it founded?

This popular notion has its foundation, ostensibly, in I Thessalonians 4:17:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air (or atmosphere): and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

This is interpreted to mean that believers will be caught up into the literal clouds high above the surface of the earth (“in the air”) and taken off to heaven. One well-known writer on the subject states:

“The largest descriptive volume of the Tribulation is found in Revelation 6 through 19. Here is a fascinating revelation about Reve-

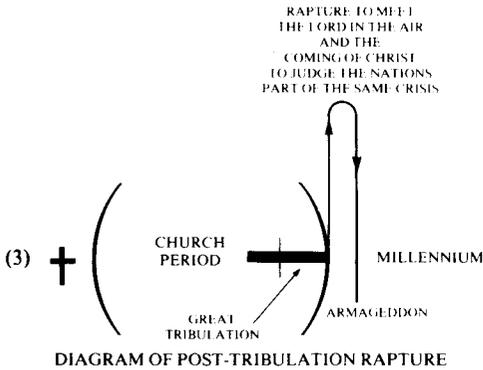
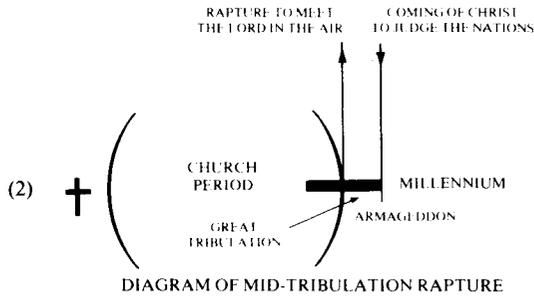
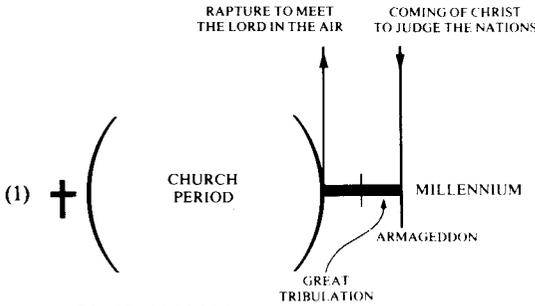
*lation. In the first five chapters of this book, the church is mentioned thirty times. In fact, in chapters 2 and 3, at the end of each letter to the churches, John says, 'Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches'. This is repeated seven times. Then we have the beginning of the description of the Tribulation and there is not one mention of the churches. The church is conspicuous by its absence. Why? Because the church will be in heaven at that time. If you are a believer, chapters 4 and 5 describe what you will be experiencing in heaven.'*²¹⁴

One further point should be made at this time with respect to the "rapture". There are currently three views as to *when* in the seven-year career of Antichrist this remarkable event will occur. (The reason for a period of seven years, rather than some other period of time, will be explained in Part 2 of this pamphlet.) The most popular view is known as the "Pre-tribulation" rapture. Exponents of this understanding believe that believers will be taken to heaven just before Antichrist begins his seven-year reign. Then there is the "Mid-tribulation" exposition, which states that the church will be here on earth for the first half of Antichrist's rule, and then be taken to heaven by Christ. Lastly, there is the "Post-tribulation" rapture, in which the view is maintained that the believers will be on earth for the whole of the seven-year reign of Antichrist. The three views are depicted diagrammatically overleaf. The important point that the reader should file away in his mind for future consideration is that the question of *when* the rapture will occur is one upon which there is some disagreement: Hence, there exists a great deal of *flexibility* on this point. The possible implications of this flexibility will be examined presently.

On returning to I Thessalonians 4:17 for a moment, the key verse used to support the entire rapture theory, it is found that the commonly accepted evangelical interpretation is not borne out either by the verse itself or by other Scripture. The clear meaning intended is that a large *body of people* (here translated "clouds" — see Hebrews 12:1) will be gathered by the power of God to a place of judgment here on this earth, in the very *air* or *atmosphere*. The place of judgment will most probably be somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula, from which Jesus and his redeemed brethren will proceed to Jerusalem. (See Deut. 33:2,3; Isaiah 63:1-6; Habakkuk 3:3; Obadiah 21; Matthew 23:39.) The theory that there will be two comings of Christ separated by a seven-year interval is one that has no basis in Scripture but is rather one that has been introduced to coincide with the theory of a Coming Antichrist.

Is there a possibility then that the following situation could develop?

THREE THEORIES OF "THE RAPTURE"



(After a popular evangelical author)

The three theories of the rapture:

1. Christ takes believers to heaven where they spend the next seven years; Antichrist appears in Jerusalem and reigns for seven years.
2. Believers live on the earth for the first 3-1/2 years of Antichrist's reign; in the middle of his reign, they are taken to heaven by Christ, while on earth his reign is dreadful for the next 3-1/2 years, known as the "Great Tribulation". (The "Great Tribulation" is supposedly described in the book of Revelation, with the time periods there being understood as **literal** periods.)
3. Believers live on earth throughout the whole of Antichrist's reign;

Christ appears at the end of the last week and gathers believers. Armageddon follows in which Christ subdues the nations.

A new Jewish leader has suddenly appeared in Jerusalem. The rapture* has not occurred. What will professing christendom conclude as this new leader commences his ambitious programs, apparently with supernatural power? Slowly, dimly, do we not begin to see a spectre taking shape on the horizon, giving us the answer to the question in Psalm 2? In their estimation this new ruler cannot *possibly* be Jesus, for he is expected to take the church away from the earth. There is only one conclusion left for them to reach: *This new ruler must be the Antichrist, and the rapture must occur either at Mid-tribulation or Post-tribulation.* Meanwhile, it is the duty of all sincere christians to prepare themselves to “witness” against this new dictator. For suddenly onto the world scene comes a new leader who:

1. Appears suddenly
2. Is a Jew
3. Claims that he is the long-looked-for Messiah of Israel
4. Has supernatural powers
5. Resides in Jerusalem
6. Commences the rebuilding of the Temple
7. Talks of restoring the Jewish nation to their position under the Covenant
8. Appears very near to the time when Russia was defeated
9. Promises the world a new era of peace and prosperity, but demands submission and commences military operations when his request is not complied with by the nations.

DOES NOT JESUS FIT IN EVERY PARTICULAR THE POPULAR CONCEPTION OF THE COMING ANTICHRIST? Can we not see that when he manifests his power, the religious leaders of the day will come to fear this political ruler and brand him as the long-awaited “Antichrist”?

And so, sad to relate, history will repeat itself. The first time, the professing religious people were expecting a Lion, and found a Lamb.

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. (John 6:15)

*It is the position of this publishing committee that those who will be called to judgment at Christ's appearing will be those noted in Psalm 50:5 — “Gather my saints together unto me; those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” This covenant is the one God made with Abraham and his “seed” or descendants. Those who are outside this covenant are not counted as saints. The two positions, namely those who are adopted into the commonwealth of Israel and are included under the terms of the Covenants of Promise, and those who are not, are clearly delineated in Ephesians 2:11-13. Others, however sincere, are not named in this agreement. They have never been adopted into the family of Abraham, that is, become spiritual Israel, and therefore have no claim to the things promised. This, unfortunately, encompasses a large group of persons who believe that they are in the way of salvation, but are not so as defined by Scripture, our only reliable guide in this most important matter. One evangelical writer expresses his hope as follows:

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In fact, he *disclaimed* any right to rule in any sense at his first coming:

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? (Luke 12:13,14)

When he would not be a king, but rather a Lamb, they would have no part of him, but demanded his crucifixion.

Now there are growing numbers of christians who expect Christ to take them to heaven while violent wars occur on the earth. Unfortunately they will experience instead a Jewish political Lion whom they will not recognize. They could find themselves warring against the real Christ who does not meet their preconceived specifications of what He should be like or what He should do at His advent. It should be noted that it was the very people who claimed that they were looking for the Messiah who opposed him at his first coming when he did not fulfil their preconceived ideas of what he should accomplish. When he does not fulfil their notions this time, such as their being taken to heaven, it is easy to see that it could be this group that will again oppose him.

There is a clear distinction then, as to how the Bible reveals the second coming and how many religious expositors view it. Even though the name Jesus is the same, it is *another* Jesus.

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached . . . ye might well bear with him (2 Corinthians 11:4).

Perhaps it comes down to the fact that his title is not understood. His name is Jesus ("Saviour"): *Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21)* However, his *office* is that of The Christ, the Anointed, the Messiah, which denotes his *national* position as ruler of the Nation of Israel. Many religious persons think that the term "Jesus Christ" is equal to, say, "John Doe". Such is not the case at all. This designation relates directly to his work — first as *Saviour* (from eternal death) of his brothers and sisters, and secondly as *National Deliverer* of the nation of Israel. When the significance of the name and office of Jesus is understood, the link between his death 2000 years ago and the rebirth of the Nation of Israel in our time is easy to comprehend; where this is not understood, confusion prevails.

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"For us, as believers, our hope is different from Israel's . . . First there is a great distinction between God's purpose for the nation of Israel and His purpose for the church, which is His main program today."¹³

This contrasts starkly with the declaration of the apostle Paul:

"For this cause therefore I have called for you, to see you and to speak with you; because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." (Acts 28:20)

The Hope that the Bible holds out is that Israel will become the centre of the Kingdom of God with the faithful seed of Abraham (whether Jew or Gentile) as the rulers. The future of Israel and the future of the redeemed are inextricably linked.

A final practical question arises in connection with this Coming Antichrist idea: *Who* could this Antichrist be? It has been said that “Coming events cast their shadow before”. What nation on this earth would have a leader who would befriend Israel (for the supposed Antichrist must be a leader of a country able to guarantee Israel, by terms of a covenant, safety for seven years), when this would immediately alienate those with whom the world economic power lies, namely, the Arabs? Would it be the United States? Russia? China? Europe (as is commonly suggested)? The Arabs themselves? What would any nation possibly have to gain by making a covenant with Israel? What nation could promise Israel that it would guarantee its survival? Would any of these nations support an individual wanting to be worshipped in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem as god? The answer clearly seems to be that no human being could ever fulfil the necessary requirements of the supposed coming Antichrist. The only individual who could possibly perform the miraculous feats required would be Jesus himself, by the power of God Almighty. It is the very show of this power which will undoubtedly deceive those looking for Antichrist into thinking that Jesus is in fact he.

Objections

As the reader has worked through the above thesis, some objections may have arisen in his mind. Three possible objections are considered below:

1. Psalm 2 indicates that the kings of the earth fight against the LORD and against his Christ. Does not this show that they know who they are fighting against, and are not deceived into thinking that this new leader is the long-expected Antichrist?

In Revelation 17:13,14 it is clearly pointed out that certain nations will resist the claims of Christ:

These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

The question being asked is whether they do this in knowledge or ignorance of whom they are opposing. An allusion to Psalm 2 is made by the early disciples in Act 4:23-27. The “kings of the earth” here are defined as being composed of both Jews and Gentiles. Did *they* oppose the LORD and His Christ in knowledge or ignorance of what they were doing, for the language is clear that they “set themselves against the LORD and His Christ”? The answer is clear: they opposed God and His Son *in ignorance*.

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for *had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory* (I Corinthians 2:8).

This shows clearly that this Psalm could very possibly apply at his second coming in the same manner as it did at his first coming; namely, re-

ferring to opposition to him in ignorance. A probable reason for this opposition is that they believe him to be the Antichrist.

2. Jesus is clearly a Jew. Is it not now true that many expositors identify Antichrist as someone from the *Roman* cult? Does not this destroy the above thesis?

It is true that many expositors identify Antichrist as a Roman. Some, however, say that he will be a Jew. Because, in our opinion, none of the prophecies used to support the Coming Antichrist concept refer to a future individual in any way, human imagination must fill in a number of gaps, which is the great danger in the entire concept. The details of this supposed Coming Antichrist are so plastic that they could very easily be moulded to fit the Christ of the Scriptures at his second coming by those anticipating the appearance of Antichrist.

3. Is not the Antichrist hypothesis only held by a very small percentage of the world's population? How could this small group influence the whole world?

It is true that the persons holding this view, taken as a percentage of the world population, are a miniscule proportion indeed. However, with a world devoted to the occult, astrology, UFOs, and soap operas, it is easy to see that should a Middle Eastern leader commence a campaign of spectacular military victories, all people would look for a solution to this new and disturbing enigma. Organized christianity would claim that it had predicted some time before that this exact situation would arise. No other philosophy or cult would have any answer. Religion now would be solicited for advice on how to handle the situation. Organized religion would, therefore, experience a tremendous resurgence of influence during this period, among people with very divergent backgrounds.

In summary, this portion of the pamphlet has outlined the opinions currently extant among many evangelical writers on the subject of the Coming Antichrist. It has been pointed out that as a result of speculation on prophecies which, in our opinion, have nothing to do with a Coming Antichrist, the similarities between what this supposed individual would do, and what the Christ of the Scriptures will do at his Second Coming, are very striking — striking to the point that when the “rapture”, as commonly conceived, does not occur, and yet a new ruler, Jesus, appears in Jerusalem, the world at large could be very well induced by professing organized christianity into believing that he is the Antichrist. Objections have been considered, and it has been shown that it is the very elasticity in the views held with respect to this Coming Antichrist that could make an application to Jesus himself at His Glorious Appearance very feasible.

The conclusion of this portion of the pamphlet is this: We would do very well to investigate the bases for all predictions concerning a Coming

Antichrist. It is particularly important at this time in history that we are neither deceived ourselves nor that we deceive others as to the nature of coming events. The warning of the apostle John speaks urgently to our generation:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world (I John 4:1).

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Part II:

A Study of A Key Prophecy

Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks

The remarkable evidence in Part I points strongly to the conclusion that a tragic case of mistaken identity will soon unfold. This appears inevitable in view of the widespread expectation that an evil despot, seeking world domination, is about to appear in Jerusalem; for his anticipated aims and work fit with astonishing similarity the prophecies concerning the future mission of Christ when he returns to the earth to set up His universal empire (Psalm 72:8; Daniel 2:44). That Christ should be confused with an imaginary evil dictator, the Antichrist, is a great tragedy — yet does it not seem bound to happen?

The inquisitive reader cannot be satisfied to let the matter rest here. Who is the author of this confusion? Is it from the Bible that many have been led to expect the appearance of Antichrist? Although this teaching is imputed to the Bible, few are they who can point to scriptures in support of the idea. It is needful, therefore, that an effort be made to acquaint the reader with that segment of Bible prophecy that provides the foundation for the whole concept of the coming Antichrist. The basis is a famous prophecy given to Daniel, commonly known as “The Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks”, because its fulfilment spans a seventy week time period. Although this prophecy is not the only one from which believers in the Antichrist theory draw their expectations, it is fair to say that it is the key by which the other prophecies are interpreted and their meaning discerned. It follows, therefore, that the soundness of the Antichrist idea stands or falls with the correctness of the interpretation of this prophecy. Before showing how this prophecy has been understood to teach the concept of the coming Antichrist, it is first advisable to carefully examine the prophecy, discern the general features of the events described and search for their fulfilment in history. The exposition is not simple, but careful consideration of the following pages may well convince the reader of the wisdom of God in revealing to Daniel much information concerning Messiah the Prince. The prophecy is found in Daniel 9:23-27:

At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that

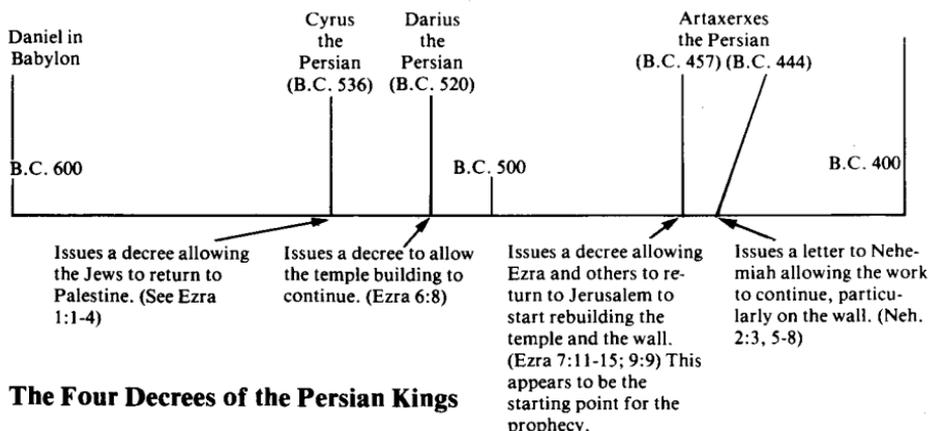
shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Notice that the prophecy expressly identifies the title of the man with whom it is chiefly concerned — Messiah the Prince. Even if the prophecy does refer to Antichrist, any possible allusion to him must be completely overshadowed by the description of Messiah the Prince, for the prophecy relates both to **the time of Messiah's coming** and to **the nature of the work** he would do. In this exposition we shall consider each of these details in turn. Throughout the discussion that follows, the reader should be encouraged to ask himself if Antichrist, as popularly conceived, is mentioned **at all** in the prophecy.

The Time Period Spanned By The Seventy Weeks

In considering the time period spanned by the prophecy, it is necessary to settle three things: first, the starting point; second, the actual measurement of time cryptically revealed as "seventy weeks"; third, the ending point. Any two of these times are sufficient to establish the third.

The information concerning the starting point is disclosed by the prophet: *From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.* At the time the prophecy was revealed to Daniel, he and his people were captives in Babylon, and the land of his nativity was occupied by foreigners. The temple and Jerusalem itself had been laid in ruins. The period of time prophetically indicated as "seventy weeks" was to begin when a commandment was given permitting the captive Jews to return to Jerusalem and undertake its restoration. If we can determine which commandment this was, and the year in which it was given, we shall have learned when the time period began. The problem is that the Bible records four different decrees, all of which bear examination, and are set out in the diagram below.



The Four Decrees of the Persian Kings

There is no obvious reason for choosing one of these decrees over the others. But one is constrained by the requirements of the case. Seventy weeks were to elapse from the giving of the decree until Messiah the Prince's work was complete. On this basis, as shall be shown, it is the third decree that appears to be the starting point for the prophecy. The Bible's record of this decree is set out in Ezra 7:11-13. *Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel. Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.* Some thirteen years later, the same Persian monarch issued a second decree, in the form of a letter given to Nehemiah. (This decree is the fourth decree on the diagram.) It would appear that Nehemiah's work towards the restoration of Jerusalem was only a continuation of the work originally begun by Ezra, for it is evident that they laboured together for a time (See Nehemiah 8:9). This is one reason for concluding that the initial decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. is the one intended by the prophecy, although admittedly a case can be made for his decree of 444 B.C. In this respect, it is interesting to note that calculations using both decrees expire at approximately the same time, if different measures of years are used. In the East where Daniel was living it was more common to measure years by the number of revolutions of the moon, twelve complete cycles of the moon being taken as one year. These years are termed "lunar years" in contrast to our more familiar "solar year" which is one complete revolution of the earth about the sun. The lunar year is about eleven days shorter than the solar year. Measuring "seventy weeks" from 457 B.C. in solar years or from 444 B.C. in lunar years results in approximately the same terminus. This point is mentioned to draw the reader's attention to the fact that this exposition is not seriously affected by the choice of starting point, as both the third decree, measuring "seventy weeks" in solar years, and the fourth decree, measuring the time span in lunar years, yield approximately the same ending point. Although it is not possible to decisively choose one decree above another as the starting point, the strongest case, in the writers' view, can be made for the third decree of 457 B.C.

It is now time to settle the second detail. What period of time is actually indicated by the prophetic measure of "seventy weeks"? There is universal agreement that seventy literal weeks are not intended, for this would be a period of time little more than one year. This leads us to a consideration of an essential principle of prophetic interpretation and a striking characteristic of prophetic revelation. In prophecy, a day is used to represent a time interval whose actual fulfilment will be one year (See Numbers 14:34, Ezekiel 4:6). Why should this be? The answer is that God has chosen symbols that represent in miniature things that are to happen on the earth. For example, two wild animals fighting represent the overthrow of one kingdom by another. Likewise, there has been a corresponding need to miniaturize the time associated with the event, so that it is in keeping with the character of the symbol employed. Beasts might fight for days but not for

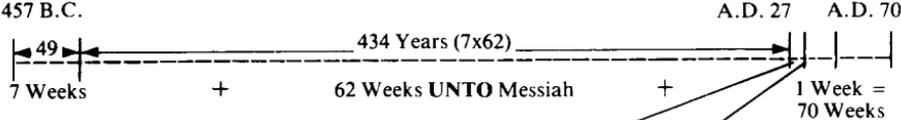
years — so that when, in prophecy, beasts symbolically enact the roles that kings and nations will later fulfil, the time associated with their activity must be expressed on a reduced scale in order to maintain the internal consistency of the revelation. Where measurements of time are involved, the key is that each day on the miniature prophetic scale represents one year of actual time when the prophecy is worked out in history. On this well established basis, the “seventy weeks” time span, comprising four hundred ninety days, corresponds to four hundred ninety years of actual time.

We are now in a position to settle the third detail concerning the time span of the prophecy — its expiry date. From Daniel 9:25 it is clear that sixty nine weeks were to elapse from the going forth of the commandment until Messiah the Prince. But what is intended by this phrase “Messiah the Prince”? Does it refer to the time of his birth or some other time? The answer to this question lies in the meaning of the term “Messiah”. It simply means *anointed*. Jesus therefore did not become the Messiah until the time of his anointing, and this certainly did not occur at his birth. The record of his anointing is contained in Matthew 3:16-17: *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* This was the incident in the life of Jesus by which he was manifested to Israel. *And I (John the Baptist) knew him (Jesus) not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water* (John 1:31) And, it is shown in Acts 10:38, that it was at his baptism, when he received the Holy Spirit without measure, that he became the Anointed of God. *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were possessed with the devil; for God was with him.* By the phrase, “unto Messiah the Prince” is intended, therefore, the time to the baptism of Jesus, for it was not until this time that he was anointed by God, and thereafter assumed the title of Messiah.

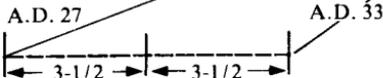
Sixty nine weeks represent four hundred eighty-three days, which, as we have shown earlier in this exposition, represent four hundred eighty-three years of actual time. Adding this time to 457 B.C., when the commandment to restore Jerusalem was given, brings us to the year A.D. 27. Was this the year in which Jesus was baptized by John? It is recorded by Luke that at the time of his baptism, Jesus was about thirty years of age (Luke 3:23). However, it is generally recognized that Jesus was born in approximately 4 B.C., in which case he would be exactly thirty years of age in A.D. 27. (When the B.C. — A.D. calendar was formulated, the birth of Christ was misplaced by about four years. This explains why Jesus was not thirty years old in A.D. 30.) Thus it was about A.D. 27 when Jesus was baptized, that year being exactly sixty nine weeks or four hundred eighty three years from the first decree of Artaxerxes.

The three details concerning the first sixty nine weeks of the prophecy have now been settled — the starting date was the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C.; the time span was four hundred eighty three years; and the ending

point was the baptism and anointing of Jesus in A.D. 27. It was noted at the outset that any two of these three details would be sufficient to establish the third. Notwithstanding the fact that an effort has been made to verify all three, it must be admitted that the main reason for choosing the third decree as the starting point — and it is the starting point that is the most difficult to fix — is that it fits in with the other two remarkably well. The following diagram, which summarizes the prophecy, adds the seventieth and final week to the sixty nine, for it is the events of this week that shall largely concern us for the balance of this exposition.



The Time Span of the Seventy Weeks



Before leaving the subject of the time spanned by the prophecy, it is worth our time to consider whether or not the prophecy had any effect on the people in the time of Christ. Four different sources indicate that the world at large was expecting Messiah to appear at that time.

The first source is the Bible itself. *And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ (the Messiah) or not* (Luke 3:15).

The Jewish historian Josephus is the second source. Writing of this general time, within forty years of the death of Christ at the time of the Jewish wars, he notes:

*“That which did especially inspire them (the Jews) to undertake this war was an ambiguous oracle likewise found in their sacred writings, how that some one of their own country, pertaining to that time, should attain the empire of the habitable earth.”*²¹

The Jews took their Scriptures with them as they spread throughout the Mediterranean world and two Romans, one an historian and the other a biographer, record an opinion similar to that of Josephus. It is probable they developed this expectation as a result of their contact with Jews. Referring to the time of the Jewish war, in A.D. 66 to 70, they wrote:

*“A few turned these events into a cause for alarm; the greater number were possessed with a belief that it was written in the ancient writings of the priests that it would come to pass at that very time, that the East would grow mighty, and that men proceeding from Judea would gain the empire of the world.”*²²

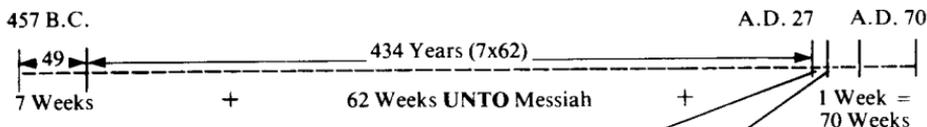
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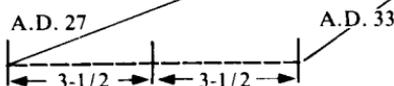
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“A firm persuasion had long prevailed through all the East, that it was fated (i.e. contained in the Book of Fates or Prophecies) at that time for the Empire of the World to devolve upon some one who should come forth from Judea.””

These four sources show that there was an expectation of a Jewish Deliverer either coincident with or shortly after the appearance of Christ, and while none of them expressly trace this idea to the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, it is apparently the source from which it was derived. One is led to conclude that the prophecy did have a noticeable effect on the world at that time.

The Nature of Messiah's Work

The prophecy of the Seventy Weeks reveals in considerable detail the events of the last week. There was much for Messiah to accomplish in this time. According to those principles developed earlier in this exposition, the last week represented seven years of actual time, beginning about the year A.D. 27. The first aspect of Messiah's life during this time that is particularly striking is the reference to his *cutting off*. Not only does the prophecy reveal that Messiah was to be slain, or “cut off”, but it establishes the time when this was to occur. The Messiah was to be cut off **after** the sixty nine weeks had ended. How long after?

To answer this question, it is helpful to consider one of Christ's parables. *(Jesus) spake also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down (Luke 13:6-9).* This parable is not difficult to interpret, because some of the symbols such as the fig tree are used elsewhere in Scripture, and their meaning can be clearly established. The “man” is evidently God Himself, who through the miracles of Christ, performed by His power, was looking for a genuine reform on the part of the nation of Israel, the fig tree. The “dresser of the vineyard” is Jesus. The last year of Jesus' ministry saw renewed efforts to convince the people, including the demonstration of God's power in the resurrection of Lazarus, and later the resurrection to immortality of Jesus Himself. Yet the nation remained unresponsive to this absolute seal that Jesus was the Messiah, and was “cut down” from the special relationship it formerly held with God. It was therefore about the middle of the last week that the ministry of Jesus ended and he was cut off, for according to the parable his ministry lasted into a fourth year.

This conclusion is confirmed by other details revealed to Daniel, for the prophecy expressly states that it was *in the midst of the (last) week (that) he (should) cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*. If the death of Christ occurred in the middle of the seventieth week, it must have been the means by which the sacrifice and the oblation were brought to an end. Is

this the conclusion of Scripture? Immediately coincident with the last breath of Christ, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, signifying that the Law of Moses, with all its institutions of sacrifice, had ceased to be the means through which God was to be approached. Explaining the importance of this event to the human race, the writer to the Hebrews says: *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins . . . Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; . . . Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh* (Hebrews 10:4,8,19-20). Christ's sacrifice accomplished what the animal sacrifices never could do, and put to an end the need for them to be offered. Before the death of Jesus, these sacrifices were an essential obligation of the worshippers' approach to God, but the death of Jesus caused this obligation to cease. Christ's sacrifice fulfilled the Law of Moses which ceased to be binding on those who would approach unto God after his death (Colossians 2:14, Galatians 5:1).

If Messiah's cutting off took place in the midst of the seventieth week, which, for the reasons we have advanced, is our conclusion, then there are still three and a half years to account for before the end of the seventieth week. The prophecy reveals that throughout the last week, Messiah would *confirm the covenant with many*. This covenant which Jesus confirmed is identified in Romans 15:8. *Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers*. Elsewhere these ancient promises, made to the patriarchs, are called the "covenants of promise" because the promises were simply the terms or conditions of the covenant (Ephesians 2:12). Having therefore scripturally identified the covenant Christ confirmed, another question may now be addressed: with whom was the covenant confirmed? The prophecy reveals that it was confirmed with "many". Jesus refers to this class of "many" at the institution of the breaking of bread. *For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins* (Matthew 26:28). This class of "many" is also mentioned later in the prophecy of Daniel in connection with the resurrection of the dead. *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt* (Daniel 12:2). It is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, for both classes shall attain to the resurrection, and for both Christ died. However, in the days of his ministry, Christ preached only to the Jews, as he himself stated: *I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel* (Matthew 15:24). Jesus, nevertheless, clearly believed and taught that there were others besides the Jews, his own nation, that were going to have the opportunity for salvation, and these others, the Gentiles, he called his "other sheep". *And other sheep I have, which are not of this (Jewish) fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd* (John 10:16). Now Jesus did not *personally* preach to the Gentiles — he did it through the agency of the apostles, especially Paul. Understandably the conversion of the first Gentile, a Roman centurion named Cornelius, caused great excitement among the early believers in Christ, who were all Jews. Great prominence is

given to this event in the Bible — the whole tenth chapter of Acts. The reaction of Peter and those Jews who accompanied him is thus described: *And they of the circumcision (the Jews) which believed, as many as came with Peter, were astonished because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 10:45). On carefully reading this account, it is noted that it was **not** because the Holy Spirit was poured out that the Jews were amazed — it was because **the Gentiles** were the recipients of it for the first time, showing they had been accepted by God and had been granted the same privileges as the Jews. The Gentiles could enter the covenant by being baptized, and thereby become heirs of the promises made to the Jewish fathers, which promises Christ had confirmed by his death.

When the news of Peter's association with Cornelius reached the ears of the Jewish believers who had not been with him, they demanded an explanation of his action. After he addressed the Jewish believers they were satisfied with his conduct. *When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.* Many years later, Peter referred back to this event when addressing an assembly of the elders in Jerusalem. *And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe* (Acts 15:7). The emphasis that this event received shows what a radical change it constituted in God's dealings with the human race. Although it is impossible to prove that the conversion of Cornelius took place within three and a half years of Christ's death, because no date for it is given in Scripture, it appears to have occurred approximately at this juncture, for in this way and at this time the covenant was confirmed with many — Gentiles as well as Jews. The final week of the prophecy, the last seven years of the four hundred ninety years, ended, then, with the conversion of Cornelius, the first of many Gentiles to become an heir of the things covenanted to Abraham by oath.

The last portion of the prophecy concerns the desolation that was to come on Jerusalem and the Jewish people as a result of their rejection of their Messiah. . . . *and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined . . . and for the over-spreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.* The prophecy does not indicate that the desolation would occur within the seventy weeks; but it occurred later as a result of the action of the Jews against Messiah during this period. In both the book of Daniel and the gospel records, the destruction of the city and the temple is distinctly linked with the crucifixion of the Anointed One. *Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children* (Matthew 27:25).

The Jewish mob who urged Pilate to crucify Jesus voluntarily accepted responsibility for the shedding of his blood. That their punishment for slaying the Son of God was to involve the loss of their city and temple is shown

by a parable Jesus taught them late in his ministry. *And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city* (Matthew 22:1-7). The king in the parable is God, whose son is Jesus; and those who were bidden to the wedding feast were the Jews. The king's servants were the apostles by whose labours the invitation was extended. Because the Jews took the life of God's son and refused to hearken to his servants, their city and their temple were levelled. History has shown that it was about forty years after the cutting off of Messiah that the city was destroyed and the temple burned by the Roman army. In the parable, however, the destruction is said to be carried out by the king's (that is, God's) armies. Titus, the Roman general in charge of the conquering army, and who led the final siege against Jerusalem, acknowledged: *We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hands of men, or any machines, do towards overthrowing these towers.*⁴ This pagan general unwittingly confirmed that God indeed used the Roman army as "his" army, to carry out His will in punishing His people, exactly as the parable stated.

History has shown the prophecy of the seventy weeks to be accurate in another minute particular. The prophecy foretold that it would be "the people of the prince that shall come and destroy the city and the sanctuary" as distinct from the prince himself. Titus, the Roman prince in command of the operation, wanted and endeavoured to save the city and the sanctuary.

*I appeal to the gods of my own country, and to every god that ever had any regard to this place (for I do not suppose it to be now regarded by any of them); I appeal to my own army, and to those Jews that are now with me, and even to you yourselves, that I do not force you to defile this your sanctuary; and if you will but change the place whereon you fight, no Roman shall either come near your sanctuary, or offer any affront to it; nay, I will endeavour to preserve your holy house, whether you will or not.*⁵

However, it had been decreed long ago that the people of the prince, whether the prince willed it or not, would destroy the sanctuary. This is what actually occurred:

. . . but these Romans put the Jews to flight, and proceeded as far as the holy house itself. At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread upon him at so great an undertaking, and being hurried only by a certain divine fury, snatched somewhat out of the materials that were on

fire, and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side of it. As the flames went upward the Jews made a great clamour, such as so mighty an affliction required, and ran together to prevent it; and now they spared not their lives any longer, nor suffered any thing to restrain their force, since that holy house was perishing, for whose sake it was that they kept such a guard about it.

And now a certain person came running to Titus, and told him of this fire, as he was resting himself in his tent after the last battle; whereupon he rose up in great haste, and, as he was, ran to the holy house, in order to have a stop put to the fire; after him followed all his commanders, and after them followed the several legions, in great astonishment; so there was a great clamour and tumult raised, as was natural upon the disorderly motion of so great an army. Then did Caesar, both by calling to the soldiers that were fighting, with a loud voice, and by giving a signal to them with his right hand, order them to quench the fire; but they did not hear what he said, though he spake so loud, having their ears already dimmed by a greater noise another way; nor did they attend to the signal he made with his hand either, as still some of them were distracted with fighting, and others with passion; but as for the legions that came running thither, neither any persuasion nor any threatenings could restrain their violence, but each one's own passion was his commander at this time; and as they were crowding into the temple together, many of them were trampled on one by another, while a great number fell among the ruins of the cloisters, which were still hot and smoking, and were destroyed in the same miserable manner with those whom they conquered: and when they were come near the holy house, they made as if they did not so much as hear Caesar's orders to the contrary; but they encouraged those that were before them to set it on fire.⁶

Although this exposition of the prophecy of the seventy weeks has not touched upon every detail, it has shown how some of the most important parts were exactly fulfilled. The Messiah came at the precise time indicated by the prophecy; he was put to death, thereby ending the Mosaic institutions; salvation was opened to the Gentiles and the everlasting covenant was confirmed with them; and the unbelieving and unrepentant nation of Israel was destroyed and scattered by the Roman desolator. This prophecy is a remarkable testimony to the truth of the scriptures, for all these things were foretold about six centuries before they occurred.

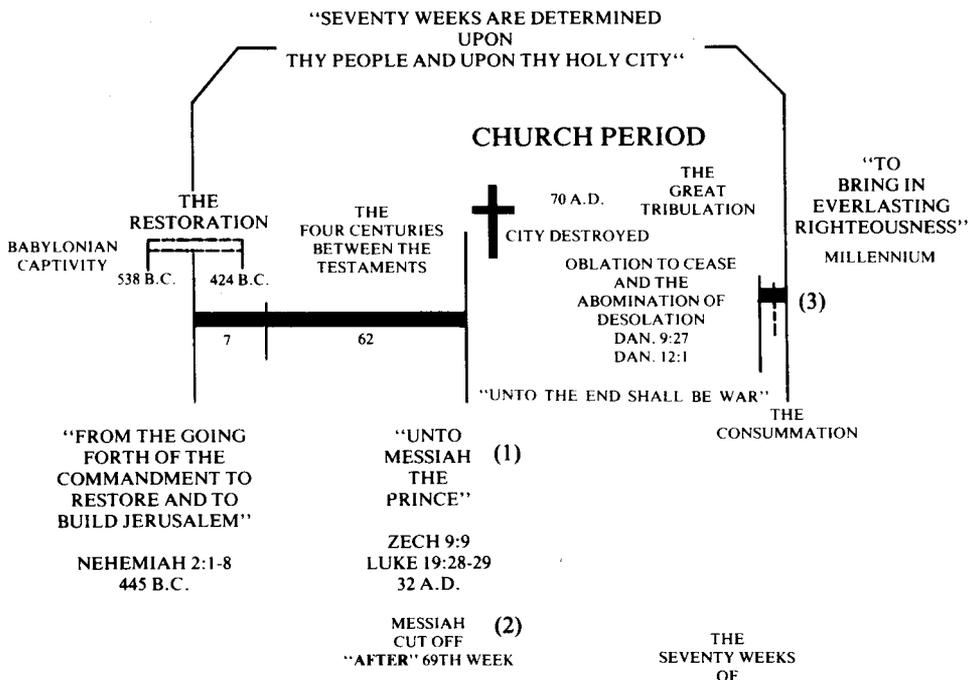
At the outset, the reader was encouraged to ponder whether Antichrist figured at all in the prophecy. Is it not through and through a prophecy about "Messiah the Prince"? It tells us when he should come; what he should accomplish for men; that he should be slain; what the effect of his death should be; and it tells us of the ensuing desolation of the Temple on account of the Jewish refusal to believe, undertaken by a pagan prince who

unknowingly carried out the will of God. These are the main features of the prophecy, and they make no provision for the work of an Antichrist.

It must come as a surprise, therefore, that a book is described as “the classic work of the marvelous prophecy of Daniel about **the Antichrist** and the Seventy Weeks.”” What could be plainer than the content of the prophecy itself that it is about “Messiah the Prince”? Yet it is the prevailing view that this prophecy concerns the Antichrist, an evil man not yet manifested in the earth. This modern interpretation is entirely erroneous and thus dangerous, because it confuses Christ and his great work and sacrifice with an imaginary worker of iniquity. Let us consider why the modern view cannot be sustained, and ought to be rejected.

The modern view can be summarized by the following diagram.

**THE MODERN EVANGELICAL INTERPRETATION OF
THE SEVENTY WEEKS' PROPHECY
WHICH RECEIVED ITS IMPETUS FROM
SIR ROBERT ANDERSON'S BOOK
THE COMING PRINCE*, (issued in 1881)**



THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET DANIEL

CHAPTER — 9:24-27

There are three major objections to this interpretation or slight variations on it.

1. The phrase “unto Messiah the Prince” signifies neither the birth nor death of Jesus, but the time of his anointing, when he rightfully assumed the title, “Messiah”. Thus, it is incorrect to mark the end of the sixty ninth week with the death of Messiah.
2. “After seven, threescore and two weeks” is taken to mean “at the end of sixty nine weeks” but this the prophecy does not state. “After” indicates some time beyond the end of the sixty ninth week, and the prophecy indicates that it was in the **midst** of seventieth week when the “cutting off” would occur.
3. The last week is said to be separated by centuries from the other sixty nine, and is supposed to be the seven year reign of Antichrist still in the future. Antichrist is to cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; but first, he must allow them to start, as they do not now exist; and so he must first rebuild the Jewish temple, make a covenant with the Jews, and break the covenant in the midst of the week. After the three and a half years, he begins persecuting the Jews. All these basic tenets of the Antichrist theory arise out of the misinterpretation of one verse in Daniel 9, verse 27. First, the verse is speaking about Messiah the Prince of the previous verse, and not about Antichrist; so it is only by removing the verse from its context that Antichrist can be read into it. Second, the covenant was to be confirmed with **many** — a term implying others besides Jews — and thus cannot be limited to the nation of Israel. Third, the covenant was to be **confirmed, not made**; which implies it was already in existence. This is easily understood when it is recognized that it was the covenant made with Abraham that is being spoken of, which Christ confirmed. Fourth, there is nothing in the prophecy that even remotely suggests that the weeks do not represent a consecutive time period. Thus, there is no basis for separating the last week from the previous sixty nine by over nineteen centuries. This was simply an invention of the Antichrist theorists for which there is no scriptural support whatever.

It may well amaze the reader that such an idea as the Antichrist theory could be derived from a prophecy exclusively about Christ. Perhaps it is easier now to see why so many of the similarities of Part I exist between Christ and Antichrist — because scriptures which reveal the former are mistakenly applied to the latter, of which the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks is but one clear example. How, then, could so many people be deceived and come to believe in a theory of which God’s word knows nothing? — This is a question whose answer must be deferred to Part III.

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2. Tacitus, **Histories**, v, section 13.
3. Suetonius, **The Twelve Caesars**, Vespasian, section 4.
4. Josephus, *op. cit.*, vi, 9, 1.
5. Josephus, *op. cit.*, vi, 2, 4.
6. *Ibid.*, vi, 4, 5-6.
7. Anderson, Robert, **The Coming Prince**, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Nineteenth edition, 1975, inside front cover.

Part III: The Modern Origin of Current Views About Antichrist

The very earliest writers on the subject of the Antichrist believed that an individual would arise either out of the Roman or Judaic systems who would fulfil the Biblical requirements of the persecuting power mentioned in prophecy. It appears to have been the general opinion that Antichrist would arise immediately after the fall of the Roman Empire, and that he would endure for a literal three and one-half year period. Opinions as to the nature of this Antichrist varied, but some, such as Hippolytus (martyred approximately 250 A.D.) wrote:

*“The Seducer will seek to appear in all things like the Son of God. As Christ a Lion, so he a Lion; as Christ a King, so he a King; as Christ a Lamb, so he a lamb, though inwardly a wolf; as Christ sent out Apostles to all nations, so will he similarly send out false apostles.”*¹

The reason that these early writers felt that Antichrist would be an individual was that it was not clear until events revealed the true meaning of the prophecies whether an individual or a succession of individuals was intended. A similar example of this type of prophecy is found in Daniel 7:17 where it is stated: “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.” History has revealed that these were four dynasties of kings which arose rather than four individual kings; but this was not clear until events had revealed the meaning. The same understanding of who was indicated by the persecuting power mentioned in the prophecies became clear as history unfolded; a dynasty rather than an individual was intended.

The Roman Empire broke up into ten kingdoms, as expected. However, a personal Antichrist did not appear. A persecuting power **did** arise which answered to all the descriptions contained in the prophecies. In A.D. 1180, the Waldensians published a treatise entitled, “Treatise on Antichrist”, in which the Papacy was nominated as the man of sin and the Catholic Church as the harlot of Babylon. This was followed a little over three centuries later by John Wycliffe’s “The Mirror of Antichrist”, in which essentially the same points were made. In 1520, Martin Luther published his book, “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church”, in which the theme was repeated. The influence of these ideas as to who Babylon and the Antichrist were can be most graphically illustrated by the following cartoons which appeared in a widely read publication issued in 1521, only four years after Martin Luther publicly challenged the Roman church with his ninety-five theses.



Christ is given a crown of thorns . . .
(John 19)



The Pope claims to have received an emperor's crown from Emperor Constantine



Christ washes his disciples' feet . . .
(John 13)



The Pope demands that his feet be kissed



Christ drives the money-changers out of the temple . . . (John 2)



The Pope sells special favours

Passional of Christ and Antichrist of 1521

The above cartoons make it abundantly clear who Antichrist was deemed to be, and explain why one of the first steps the Catholic Church took as part of the Counter-reformation was to introduce new interpretations as to who Antichrist was — an individual who was to appear in Jerusalem at the end of the age — and not the Roman Catholic system through-

out its long history of persecution, as claimed by the Reformers. The need for this new interpretation arose directly as a result of the evidence against the Church — namely the remarkable conformity between her actions and what was prophesied about a persecuting power to arise out of the Roman Empire (see text).

The Roman Church was losing ground steadily in Europe. In 1540, Ignatius Loyola founded the now infamous Society of Jesus (Jesuits) as the order who was to spearhead the Counter-reformation. It soon became apparent that persecution was not going to change people's minds as to the meaning of the Apocalypse; and thus a truly brilliant strategy was devised: Develop new interpretations!

Two of the most brilliant scholars in the Society were appointed to carry out the work: F. Ribera and L. Alcasar. And what were the explanations they put forth? Let us hear the answer from a Catholic writer:

“The Futurist School, founded by the Jesuit Ribera in 1591, looks for Anti-Christ, Babylon, and a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, at the end of the Christian Dispensation.

The Praeterist School, founded by the Jesuit Alcasar in 1614, explains the Revelation by the Fall of Jerusalem or by the fall of Pagan Rome in 410 A.D.”

More specifically, Ribera treated much of Revelation as a commentary on Matt. 24; the city where the witnesses of Rev. 11 are slain as Jerusalem; and Antichrist as reigning for 3-1/2 years at the end of the age. He believed Rome was mentioned in the Apocalypse but that this referred to a final apostacy by the Antichrist in Rome (not the Pope) at the end of time.

Alcasar, on the other hand, expounded the Revelation as follows: Rev. 1-11 referred to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and the rejection of the Jews; Rev. 12-22 the overthrow of Paganism, and establishment of the empire of the Roman Church over Rome and the whole world, the judgment of the great Whore, and the destruction of Babylon, being effected by Constantine and his successors; and Rev. 21, the New Jerusalem, the glorious state of the Roman Church in heaven.

Protestant expositors immediately reacted to these ideas:

“But mine anger and indignation burst out against the Jesuits. For when I had by chance light upon Ribera, who made a commentary on this same holy Revelation, Is it even so? said I. Do the Papists take heart again; so as that book, which of a long time before they would scarce suffer any man to touch, they dare now take in hand, to intreat fully upon? What! was it but a vain image or bug, at the sight whereof they were wont to tremble a few years since, even in the dim light, that now they dare be bold to look wishly upon this glasse in the clear sunshine; and dare to proclaime to the world that any other thing rather is poynted at in it than their Pope of Rome?” (Thomas Brightman, circa 1600)

Other writers, such as Nicolas Vignier the Younger, rose up to answer the expositions put forth by the Roman writers; for example, he wrote a book entitled (loose translation from the French) "The Theater of Antichrist: Which is a response to Cardinal Bellarmine, Sieur de Remond, Ribera, Viegas, Sanderus and others which by their writings condemn the doctrine of the English Reformers on this Subject" (Rochelle, 1614).

And so the controversy continued: the Protestants maintained that the book of Revelation was currently being fulfilled and the Romanists that it was either in the future or the past.

The next significant interpreter who influenced the whole course of interpretation was the Jesuit Lacunza, born in South America in 1731. He wrote under the Jewish name Ben Ezra (calling the Jews his "brethren" in his preface). His great work was entitled "The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty" and was originally published in Spanish. He believed the Antichrist would appear within the Roman church itself, and rejected the general Catholic interpretation that Antichrist would be an individual Jew. However, he was a Futurist, and was one of the first to interpret the woman of Rev. 12 as the Zion of Isaiah. His book was translated into English in 1826 by Edward Irving, of the Scotch Church in England. The book then received wide circulation, and was the instrument in turning the Protestant world to a Futurist interpretation of prophecy. A great number of Protestant writers then produced Futurist interpretations:

- 1826 Edward Irving — "Babylon and Infidelity foredoomed of God; a Discourse on the prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse, which relate to these latter times, and until the Second Advent."
- S.R. Maitland — "An Enquiry into the grounds on which the prophetic period of Daniel and St. John has been supposed to have consisted of 1260 years."
- 1829 S.R. Maitland — "A Second Inquiry into the grounds on which the prophetic period of Daniel and St. John has been supposed to have consisted of 1260 years."
- 1831 S.R. Maitland — "A Letter to the Rev. William Digby, A.M., occasioned by his Treatise on the 1260 days."
- 1838 Joseph Tyso — "An Elucidation of the Prophecies, being an exposition of the Books of Daniel and the Revelation, showing that the seventy weeks, the one thousand two hundred and sixty days, and the events predicted under the seven trumpets and seven vials have not yet taken place, but that they will be accomplished within the space of about three years and a half from their commencement, and probably at no distant period."

- 1838 W. Burgh — “The Apocalypse Unfulfilled; or an Exposition of the Book of Revelation.”
- 1841 D. MacCausland — “The Latter Days of the Jewish Church and Nation, as Revealed in the Apocalypse.”
- 1865 D. MacCausland — “The Latter Days of Jerusalem and Rome as Revealed in the Apocalypse.”

The general tenor of the writings of the day can be ascertained from the following:

*“But are so without rule and measure of interpretation? Is the word of God no rule or measure for its own interpretation? — the word of God, honestly taken, compared with itself, made its own interpreter? We are told we must resort to the foreign aid of history — that none are qualified to interpret prophecy who are not deeply read in history — and that the Christian most thoroughly furnished with knowledge of the Scriptures must here go to the commentators. But if I were called on to name one advantage more than another which the system for which I contend has over that which prevails (i.e. the historical system—ed.), I would say it is its maintaining the SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE. The interpreter of prophecy must be read in history — yea, truly, in the history of the Bible; for where are the prophecies, the fulfilment of which we can only ascertain from history — of the fulfilment of which the Scripture history does not contain the record?”*⁴

Generally, Futurists insisted that the book of Revelation referred to the Jewish Nation:

“On hearing such expositions we are inclined to ask how it is that such agreement can exist as to a principle of interpretation which involves so violent a wresting of the words of Scripture . . . Commentators supposed it necessary to apply the sixth seal to some of these events and it followed that this seventh chapter could not apply to the Jewish people, but must find its fulfilment in the history of the Gentile church.

*Now I do not blame these expositors for being desirous that their systems hang together . . . we cannot set aside or accommodate it in a manner as we now find to be necessary to the system by which we hoped to explain this book: this chapter can only refer to the Jewish nation.”*⁵

About this same time, historical writers began to defend their understanding of the prophecies. The two most notable works were (1) “First Elements of Sacred Prophecy” by T.R. Birks, 1843. This work contains a detailed review of the Futurist views of his day, and, in our opinion should be read by every individual who is attempting to elucidate the prophecies. (2) In addition, this era saw the publication of E.B. Elliott’s “Horae Apocalypticæ” a work of some 2800 pages. This work is invaluable as it

contains 300 pages outlining what various expositors have understood prophecy to mean from the first century to 1862.

The controversy that existed about prophetic interpretation can be found from reading this comment:

“The Jew is the key to prophecy” says Mr. Burgh . . . Again, on Apoc. xi, 1. “Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein; but the court without, measure not, for it is given to the Gentiles, and they shall tread under foot the holy city forty-and-two months,” he observes to this effect: — that every word marks to an unprejudiced reader that the passage concerns the Jewish nation; and that it is a matter of astonishment that the passage should have been so allegorized by most Protestant expositors, as to exclude all reference to the Jewish people.”⁶

A few Protestant writers adopted the Praeterist or destruction-of-Jerusalem-and-fall-of-pagan-Rome interpretation. In England, S. Davidson became the chief spokesman; in America Moses Stuart became its chief advocate. The latter, in his commentary, makes the following enlightening comment:

*“Near the commencement of the seventeenth century (1614), the Spanish Jesuit Ludovicus ab Alcasar published his *Vestigatio arcani Sensus in Apocalypsi*; a performance distinguished by one remarkable feature, which was then new. He declared the Apocalypse to be a continuous and connected work, making regular advancement from beginning to end, as parts of one general plan in the mind of the writer. In conformity with this he brought out a result which has been of great importance to succeeding commentators. Rev. v-vi, he thinks, applies to the Jewish enemies of the Christian Church; xi-xix to heathen Rome and carnal and worldly powers; xx-xxii to the final conquests to be made by the church, and also to its rest, and its ultimate glorification. This view of the contents of the book had been merely hinted at before, by Hentenius, in the Preface to his Latin version of Arethas, Par. 1547. 8vo; and by Salmeron in his *Preludia in Apoc.* But no one had ever developed this idea fully, and endeavoured to illustrate and enforce it, in such a way as Alcasar . . . Although he puts the time of composing the Apocalypse down to the exile of John under Domitian, yet he still applies ch. v-xi to the Jews, and of course regards the book as partly embracing the past.*

It might be expected, that a commentary that thus freed the Romish church from the assaults of the Protestants, would be popular among the advocates of the papacy. Alcasar met, of course, with general approbation and reception among the Romish community.”⁷

And so a commentary written in 1880 could summarize as follows:⁸

1. The Preterist System

“According to this system the successive statements of the Revelation apply chiefly to the history of the Jewish nation, down to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the history of Pagan Rome . . . The earliest expositors of this class is to be named Lud. Alcasar . . . who prepared the way for the commentaries of Hugo Grotius . . . and more recently, of Moses Stuart . . .”

2. The Historical or Continous System

“The Historical school includes the great majority of Commentators. To it belong those who uphold the “Year-day” theory; as well as those who interpret chronologically. Writers of this school differ widely among themselves.”

3. The Futurist System

“The ‘Futurists’ apply the predictions of the Apocalypse to the events which are to immediately precede, or immediately follow, the Second Advent of Christ. The writers of this school usually (although they are not always consistent) interpret literally: — Israel is the literal Israel; the Temple is the literal Temple built at Jerusalem; the 3-1/2 times, 42 months, 1260 days, are 3-1/2 natural, literal years. It is clear that there can be no discussion as to the accuracy or inaccuracy of the results of this system of interpretation in any of its forms. The Future defies criticism.

“Ribera seems to have been the earliest Futurist.”

Throughout this pamphlet the attempt has been made to support the hypothesis that a case of mistaken identity will occur at the time of the second coming of Christ to the earth. This concept is not new. Soon after the Future Antichrist idea was advanced by the Jesuit priesthood, Joseph Mede, a Protestant expositor wrote:

“The sixth phial shall be poured out upon that great river Euphrates, that being dried up, a passage may be prepared for new enemies of the Beast to come from the East; that is, for the Israelites to be wonderfully converted to the pure faith and worship of Christ, and now to have conferred upon them the kingdom promised so many ages since. Whom the worshippers of the Beast, haply, shall esteem for the army of their imaginary Antichrist to arise from among the Jews, God so revenging the obstinacy of their error . . .”

In other words, Mede felt that at the end of the age, when Jesus is acknowledged as the king of the Jews and starts making demands on the world, that the peoples of Europe (“worshippers of the beast”) would hail him as the Antichrist of their inventions. In our day, as the anticipation of a coming Antichrist rises, it would appear very probable that Mr. Mede’s expectation will be fulfilled.

With the acceptance of Futurism, or the idea of an Antichrist yet to come, many “gaps” of time were created in the prophecies to explain the apparent silence of the Bible on events between the fall of Rome (or, in some cases the death of the Messiah) and the Second Coming of Christ. These “gaps” of time, covering 2,000 years, and on which the Bible apparently offers no guidance as to what would occur, were necessitated by preconceived interpretations rather than actually being indicated in the text of the prophecies, and have become a hallmark of Futurist expositions. The reader must judge for himself whether or not they are valid.

In conclusion, it is evident that the **real** impetus for the interpretation of the Antichrist as being an individual, yet future, arose as a result of the need for the Church of Rome to deflect the force of the Protestant expositions exposing her at the time of the Reformation. Gradually, these views worked themselves into Protestant understanding as noted above, and today are the accepted expositions in the vast majority of professing christian circles. This pamphlet has outlined, hopefully in a constructive manner, what the consequences of these interpretations may yet prove to be in the near future.

“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance; and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

Be wide now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

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