

Lecture 2 — The Apostasy and Antichrist.

1 Thess. 1: 8-10; 2 Thess. 2.

Behold the Bridegroom!

Ten lectures on the second coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

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The burden of these verses in the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians is the Christian hope, — the coming of the Lord Jesus as the Bridegroom, as the Saviour. Most simply, yet beautifully, does the Spirit of God, in addressing the Thessalonians, bring out this hope. Nothing could be more plain, simple, or distinct. The apostle, a few months after he had been at Thessalonica, where he had preached the Gospel for three weeks, and where many had believed it, writes unto them to confirm their faith, and to comfort them concerning some that had fallen asleep, and he says that wherever he went in the district he had no need to speak, because "they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols." Turned to God from idols, that is conversion of the right stamp. Observe, it is not from idols to God, it is "to God from idols." It is the attractive power of the love of God, it is the attractive blessed power of the grace of God, that touches the heart, and leads a man to drop the things that have been an idol — things that have never really filled him, or really blessed him. To turn to God from idols is blessed indeed, but yet there is more. What? "To serve the living and true God," — a wonderfully happy thing to do in this world, — and that is what we are called, and saved for — to serve the living and true God. Christianity does not suppose that when a man is brought to God, when his soul is saved through grace, that he then sits down, and folds his arms, and says, "Well, I am saved for glory, and that is the end of it." Not at all. He turns to God from idols, to *serve* the living and true God. Mark, every person who hears my voice tonight, is either serving the living and true God, or serving the god of this world, the devil. Your service is either rendered to the living God, or else you are dominated by the god of this world, who carries men on, in their lusts and passions, to perdition.

There is nothing more grand than to be a Christian — no greater privilege than to serve the living God. I know many a young man thinks it is a dull thing to be a Christian. I will tell you what I think, it is a very dull thing not to be a Christian. Oh! it will be a very solemn thing — a very terrible thing — for a man to find out, at the end of his course, that he has been all wrong, to wake up, in eternity, and find out that his whole past on earth, has been a grand mistake, from end to end. And that is what many a man will find out by-and-by. But, oh! how blessed is it to know the God of all grace, and then to serve Him, the living and true God, and "wait for his Son

from heaven whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." It is a far brighter, and happier side of my subject, to think of that which is now the portion of the soul, — present salvation, and deliverance from wrath, — than to indicate coming sorrows. Paul cannot speak of the Lord's second return without weaving in something connected with His first coming. Jesus, he says, is the One you are waiting for. What is Jesus to you? Is He coming as a judge? Thank God, no. Is He coming to deal with our sins? Thank God, no, "Jesus which *delivered* us from the wrath to come" is the One we wait for. Christians are already a delivered people.

The simplest believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is delivered — he knows it — is delivered from the wrath to come, by that which has already come — perfect grace in the person of the blessed Son of God, become a man in this world, and gone down into death, that He might redeem and bring to God, in absolute righteousness, all who trust His blessed name. The immediate hope of the already delivered Christian is the return of the Lord Jesus in the character of the Bridegroom. I know people say, "Of course, the Lord is coming by-and-by, — nobody knows when, — and then it will be a matter of judgment." Yes, He will come, and He will judge. That is all quite true, but, before the day when He comes to judge the world in righteousness, He comes and meets His own people, and gathers them up out of this world. He comes first for His own loved ones, — some who have fallen asleep, and are in the grave, others living on the earth at the moment of His coming, alive, waiting, watching, serving, and happily looking for His return, and He comes into the air with the assembling shout, "with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Now, I defy you to give me anything brighter, or better than that. I challenge you, men of the world, to give me anything to eclipse that. "Oh!" but some one says, "you will have to go through death!" I don't deny that I may have to, but I absolutely deny that I must, and I truly confess that I am not looking for death, but waiting for Jesus from heaven. The early Christians were called to wait for the Son of God from heaven, and they were waiting. Quite true, while they waited some fell asleep, and therefore the apostle writes to comfort those whose friends had fallen asleep; but, nevertheless, it is apparent that the dominant hope of the Christian, in that day, was the immediate return of the Lord Jesus Christ, in this character, and nothing could be more blessed. He is coming as the Bridegroom, and we saw last Lord's Day evening, at the close of the 25th chapter of Matthew, where the Lord describes what the end of this dispensation will be, when He does come back, that Christendom will be after this sort: "five were wise, and five were foolish," and the wise — "they that were *ready*" — went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut, and the others were left outside, very busy *trying to get ready*. No doubt they got thoroughly roused, and were very desirous to be ready; and I have no doubt, dear friends, that if the Lord came tonight at eight o'clock, you would be uncommonly anxious at nine o'clock to get ready; but mark, you would be too late. *Too late!* What a thought! Therefore I say, with all sincerity of heart and affection to every person here now, *You get ready*. "Trim your lamps and be ready." Why? Because the midnight cry has gone out, and the Lord is coming.

But when will He come? say you. Scripture never sets a moment as to when He is to come. No date or no time is ever given. Why? Because if it fixed a date, it would necessarily put the

Lord's coming off to the date that had been fixed. Now-a-days some — wiser than Scripture — have been foolhardy enough to fix a date Now where are such, and all their followers? They have got into the company of those of whom the Lord speaks in the 24th of Matthew, "That evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord *delayeth* his coming." I ask you, would you like Him to come tonight? Let us put it to ourselves clearly, and simply. "No," you say, "I would like it put off for a bit." Then I say you are arm in arm with the evil servant. The evil servant says in his heart, "My lord *delayeth* his coming," and what is the next thing he does? He begins "to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken," *i.e.*, he gets into the world. Then the Lord comes, and appoints him his portion with the hypocrites, because he said, I am waiting for Christ, whereas in his heart he was not doing so. The Lord give you grace to be really ready; get you hold of the wonderful atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and whosoever will is welcome to come to Him, to receive Him, to believe Him, and to know Him. Then what is the next thing? We rise and meet Him in the air, and we pass into the scenes of rest, and life, and joy, that He has prepared for us in His infinite grace; we go to the Father's house, and eternal rest; and oh, what a wonderful thing to be sure about! Can you be sure? Indeed you may. He died that you might be sure. Look at this verse, "Who delivered us from the wrath to come." We have got it, — the believer has eternal life; he has his sins forgiven. He is ready.

But some person may say, "I thought the world had to be made ready, I thought the whole world had to be converted, and put right, in order to the introduction of the Lord's reign." How do you propose to effect it? I anticipate your answer," By the preaching of the Gospel." Let us hear Scripture.

The reason why I read 2 Thessalonians 2, was to bring to your notice tonight, the distinct and definite statement of the Spirit of God, as to what will be the absolute condition of Christendom, — what would be the condition of Edinburgh — not to go outside of our own circle — if the Lord came into the air, and every Christian was taken up to be with Himself? What would be left? Face the thing, what would be left? A seething mass of lifeless corruption. Christian profession in abundance, without one spark of Christian life, for every real Christian will have been caught away to glory. I know perfectly well that many a man is full of the idea that the world is to be put right by the Gospel. But what is the effect of this notion? You are playing into the hands of infidels. The man who holds that theory has not got any foundation in Scripture for it, and plays unwittingly into the hands of infidels. In what way? The infidel turns round and says, "You are a fine lot, you Christians; are you getting this world made much better?" The Christian is obliged to own that it is not. I am not expecting it. I am looking to get men turned to God, and brought, by the Gospel, out of the world, which is only ripening rapidly for judgment. I admit I want your heart for Christ, but why, because that will fit you for His coming. You see, if I think of the world getting better, I have to inquire, Is it better? Is commercial morality higher today? Are morals more elevated? Is society more chaste? Are husbands more true, wives more loving, children more dutiful, friends more reliable, servants more faithful? I see lots of you shaking your heads. We have to admit that as regards the world it may be outwardly somewhat whitewashed, but when people talk of progress, I grant you it is progressing, but it is progressing towards judgment. But, thank God, before the judgment comes, Jesus comes. That is exactly what the Christian wants. We are going to be taken out of it

Look how the apostle argues in the 2nd chapter of 2nd Thessalonians. He does not make a new revelation of the truth of the Lord's coming, but he draws a most beautiful argument from it. He says, "I beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." It is a wonderfully happy thing to get a good big gathering of Christians down here. What a warming your heart will get, one of these days, when we have this great big gathering. When that gathering comes, there will be no break up. Ah! you say, that will be glorious. You are right, it will be grand, to be gathered up, by and to the Lord. Look at the words, "I beseech you, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is present (set in)." Why does he beseech them? The reason is simple. The Thessalonians were passing through tremendous persecution; they had received the Gospel, they had owned it, they had confessed it, and young converts were preaching it. We are, however, I fear, all too fond of relegating to other people that which the Lord has committed to us, for if I receive Jesus as my own Saviour, it is my privilege, as well as my responsibility, to tell you about Him. What did Andrew do when he was converted? He went and brought Peter to Jesus. When the soul receives Christ, it communicates the good tidings. That is the way it spreads. Conversion is like scarlet fever. When it gets into a family, it is wonderful how it will spread. No doubt, the proper plan is to keep the fever out, but by all means let the conversion in, for if conversion gets into one member of the family, thank God, it will soon spread, because the heart that really receives Christ, will be telling the others about Him. So, when Paul came into Macedonia and Achaia to tell them the Gospel, they said, We have heard it already from these Thessalonians. A beautiful testimony, indeed, as to what their life was.

What is the next thing? Persecution comes, downright, bitter, stern, terrible persecution for Christ's sake. What then? The devil comes in, and he says to these young, uninstructed Thessalonians, "Ah! you have missed it, you have missed the coming of the Lord, and the day of the Lord has set in." Do you not think they knew what the day of the Lord meant? Do you know what the day of the Lord means? The apostle beseeches "that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is set in." What is the day of Christ? The day of Christ is a terrible word for a wicked man. It will be a terrible day for the world in its ungodliness. What the devil was doing, was by means of false letters. Satan, at the best, is only an imitator. The first Epistle to the Thessalonians, had been written by the apostle to comfort them concerning the brethren that had fallen asleep. They thought that some who had fallen asleep would miss coming with Christ in His glory. No, he says, "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." He will come with all His saints. But he goes on to tell them how it will happen, in order that they, who fall asleep, may come back with Him in glory. He, as it were, says, I will tell you something that never was revealed before, that the Lord is going to come into the air, that He is going to raise the dead, and take up the living that are His, and then, you and they, we all, shall come back again with the Lord when He comes, as Son of Man, and King of kings.

Well, comforted by this word of the apostle, they continue in their testimony, and then persecution comes, and now the devil, who hates all Christians, says, — I will terrify them. There is nothing the devil likes better than to terrify people. So he writes a letter to say that the day of the Lord has already set in. What did that mean to them? Said they, It is perfectly clear that we have missed the rapture; we have missed what we were looking for; and they got into a

great state of anxiety. Paul, therefore, writes this second epistle to assure them that the day of the Lord had not come, because, as you will see, if you turn back to 2 Thessalonians 1, the portion of the saint in that day is given in the 7th verse, — "*rest, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels*" (verses 6-9). Paul carries them on to the moment of the revelation. Christ comes in absolute glory, with His people, in that day. The day of the Lord is marked by this, that the righteous shine as the sun, and the wicked are troubled. But what was going on just then? Why, he says, you who are the righteous are troubled now, you are troubled by the wicked — the day of the Lord cannot have come, because the day of the Lord is marked by this, that the righteous are blessed, and the wicked are to be troubled, when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I should like just to clear the subject, by turning to one or two Old Testament passages, that you may distinctly see what "the day of Christ" means in Scripture. Turn to Isaiah, 13: 6: — "Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint and every man's heart shall melt: and they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir."

Now look at another witness, Joel, 2nd chapter: Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness" (Joel 2: 1, 2). Mark its character — "a day of darkness and of gloominess; a day of clouds and of thick darkness." Then in the 11th verse: — "And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army; for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" Who can abide it? None but a saint. I recommend you, sinner, not to risk it. The great day of His wrath is coming, and who shall be able to stand?

Look now at Amos: — "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?" (Amos 5: 18.) No brightness! The day of the Gospel is all brightness, and light. Thank God we are in the day of the Gospel; thank God, we are here now, while bright light, and heavenly glory are streaming upon us. There is no gloominess now. Thank God. It is all brightness, and gladness, and peace, when you are brought to know the heavenly Saviour. This is the day of grace. But the day of the Lord — these scriptures surely will convince any grave person — will be an awful day for the ungodly.

Let us come back to 2 Thessalonians 2, and observe what precedes, and ushers in that day. The apostle goes on: — "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (ver. 3). Nothing could be plainer than that. The day of the Lord, the day of Christ, the day of which the Old Testament Scriptures speak so abundantly, that day, says the Spirit of God here, cannot come, until there come first of all a falling away — an apostasy — and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. You have three things here, — an apostasy instead of Christianity; "the man of sin" instead of Christ; and you will find a little lower down in the chapter, the devil instead of the Holy Ghost. That is what is coming. You have apostasy instead of truth, the man of sin instead of the ministry, and presentation of the man of God — grace; and you have also the power of Satan, instead of the living power of the blessed Spirit of God. That is what is before Christendom; that is what will be the inevitable, manifested consequence of the rapture of the saints. By the "rapture," I mean the moment of the Lord's people being taken away to glory. Every Christian goes up; I mean every converted man. Every believer of the Gospel goes up; and then comes to pass the statement, — "truth is fallen in the street" (Isa. 59: 14).

The Lord has come into the air, and gathered out of the world His own people. And what is left? Apostasy. What a solemn thing! You say, What is that? It is really leaving first estate, giving up what God has conferred in goodness; but, in effect, it is the blinding judgment that God will pass over this land, and many another land, where the light of the Gospel has been, and where, alas! it has been neglected and slighted. Nothing can be more solemn than the way in which the Spirit of God describes Christendom's state here. It is the widespread giving up of the truth, — that is apostasy. What God has given to the Church in responsibility, that she utterly gives up. When the real saints are gone, when the true living believers are gone, what is left behind? The carcase of an effete, lifeless religiousness; and only judgment can fall on Christendom's wide area of lifeless, and utterly Christless profession. It is a dead system; and, after death, it is not long before it is a putrid corrupt thing. I know the devil will do his best to make people say things are all right, when they are all wrong; but God's Word shows that Christendom is the spot upon which the deepest and direst judgment of God must fall, because Christ, and truth have been refused, and slighted, and cast out.

The apostasy surely comes apace; and I do not think there is any sober person in this audience tonight, carefully looking for himself, who will be able to contradict the apostle's statement, as he says, lower down in our chapter (ver. 7), "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." I should like to ask some of you who have now grey hairs, What is the state of things, as regards the truth, compared with fifty years ago? You know how the very Scriptures of truth have been undermined in your own land. You know that some, whom you thought would be the conservators of the truth of God, are the very men, who, carried away by human reasoning, have ruthlessly taken the axe of modern scientific criticism, and cut out first one, and then another piece of the Word of God, until, if we were to believe these learned neologians, there would only be some small shreds of the Bible left for faith to feed upon. Thank God, faith knows better than dark unbelief what is of, and from God, and so it holds on to the blessed Book of books, from cover to cover. Nevertheless, this is the beginning of the end, — "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." But when the Lord comes, and the Spirit and the Bride are taken up out of the scene, things will ripen for evil with unprecedented rapidity. I believe that the world will

proclaim a general holiday when they have got rid of every testimony for Christ. That is what the Holy Ghost speaks of here as the apostasy.

But you, who think that, if the Lord were to come, you might still get the Gospel afterwards, I would like you to weigh carefully what the Spirit brings out here. The testimony to a heavenly Christ has ceased ere the moment of the apparition of "the man of sin." Some one says, "But I thought the man of sin had appeared long ago." I do not deny the principle of it in the papacy, but that is not the fulfilment. Let us look at this "son of perdition." His names are pretty abundant in Scripture, and I would like just to indicate, what I believe to be the testimony of the Word of God, as to the person spoken of here, — the man of sin. He is antichrist, — the one who tries to arrogate to himself the divine attributes, and characteristics of Christ. There are a good many allusions to him in Scripture, and under several names. Go to the Psalms, for instance; the 10th Psalm and 17th verse: "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear; to judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress." (Ps. 10: 17) When antichrist comes, he is "the man of the earth," he is the true descendant of the first man. Look at Jesus. What does Jesus do? He comes from heaven, dies to fit you for heaven, and then takes you to heaven; He is the heavenly Man. But what about this man, he is "the man of the earth."

The Spirit of God describes him also in Isaiah 30: 30, "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for THE KING ALSO it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." He is the "king" here, while his end is also predicted. This fully accords with, and in fact, I presume, is alluded to in Revelation 19: 20, 21. Go to Isaiah 57, where he is again spoken of God is reproaching His earthly people because of their idolatry, and departure from Him. Their greatest sin is this (9th verse), "And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell." This may allude to the incense offered to the idol, "the image to the beast" of Rev. 13, for which the king will be responsible. Doubtless in the day when this is reached, the claims which antichrist will make, to be the long-looked-for Messiah, will have acted on many; and, regardless of the Lord's words, "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show signs and great wonders" (Matt. 24: 23), there will be many going to the king with ointments.

If you now turn to the 11th of Daniel, you will again find him brought before you most strikingly. In the Old Testament, he is presented as "the king," because he will get his seat in Jerusalem, and he will have dominance, and kingly authority over the Lord's then earthly people, the Jews, who will have been brought back to their own land ere he arises. "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers [Jehovah], nor the desire of women [Christ], nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all" (Dan. 11: 36, 37). Here is another characteristic of him; he has no sense of his dependence upon God, the will of his own heart is that which governs and dominates him. Then in John 5 our Lord Jesus Christ marks him out most distinctly. Pleading with the Jews, He had said to them that He had come that they "might be saved." They would not have Jesus, and

refused every testimony to Him. The Lord cites the four-fold testimony to Himself, John the Baptist (ver. 33), His own works (ver. 36), the Father (ver. 37), and the Scriptures (ver. 39). He says then, "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (verses 39, 40). "I am come in my Father's name [He had no business on earth, but the Father's will and wishes], and ye receive me not; if another shall come *in his own name*, him ye will receive" (ver. 43). Solemn prediction — antichrist comes in "his own name," and is received.

Then if we turn to the 1st Epistle of John, we shall find the Spirit of God indicating not alone the name and character, but the features and the action, of this one (1 John 2: 22) — "Who is the liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is the antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." The first is what he will do in view of the Jew; there is what I may call Jewish infidelity. He denies that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, and God stamps him as a liar. Next, "he is the antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." That is what is now more than ever coming up, — the dark and ever-widening river of rationalism. It is the denial that we have a revelation from God. It is the denial of the revelation of the Father and the Son; and, in this being, this "man of sin," it will by-and-by all culminate. And what does he do? He denies the Father and the Son, — that is, he sweeps every remaining vestige of Christianity aside, for the great truth of Christianity is the Father and the Son. He denies the Father and the Son, and he denies that Jesus is the Christ. That is a setting aside of what is a special truth for the latter-day Jews; and now you will find that this exactly concurs with what the apostle Paul brings out in his wonderful description of this man, — for a man he is; it is not a system merely.

There are yet two other strikingly descriptive names that he gets. Turn to the book of Revelation, and you will see the closing testimony of the Spirit of God as to this man (Rev. 13: 11): — "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." He is the imitation of Christ, "two horns like a lamb." "And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth, and them which dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." You see he exercises immense power, and here he is called a "beast," a "wild beast" truly, though simulating the characters of Him who is God's Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you look at the 19th chapter, you find his last title, and unspeakably awful doom. At the 20th verse we read, — "And the beast [the Roman imperial head] was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." (Rev. 19: 20.) In the Old Testament there were two men — Enoch and Elijah — who went up to glory without death; in New Testament times there are two men who go to the lake of fire without death, and they are here. The beast with ten horns is the head of political opposition, and the false prophet the head of the ecclesiastical opposition, against God in that day. Why is he called a false prophet? It is very simple, There are three beautiful characters in which the Lord Jesus Christ is presented. He is prophet, priest, and king. When He was on earth, He was the prophet that Moses spake of; but now in glory, He is the priest; and by-and-by He is going to be the king. This one will imitate Him absolutely; he is the false prophet, the tyrant-king; and more than that, he will be, not exactly priest, but anti-priest — he goes utterly against the true people of God of that day.

This man seeks to arrogate to himself what belongs to Christ. And now, if you refer once more to 2nd Thessalonians, you will find, that it is not only that there is this daring simulation of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he has the audacity to take the place of God (2 Thess. 2: 4): — "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." He actually claims divine prerogative. "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time." What is the hindrance now? I doubt not the hindrance, at the present moment, is the active working of the Holy Ghost. He is the hinderer, but the moment the completion of the Church, the body of Christ, arrives, and the rapture occurs, the Holy Ghost, who forms, and indwells that Church, is removed from the earth. He came down at Pentecost to form the Church, and He will go up with the Church.

When He who hinders the opening of all the floodgates of iniquity is "taken out of the way," and ceases to work in His present way, what takes place? The floodgates of wickedness are let loose, flung wide open, and out comes this "man of sin," who takes the place of Christ; nay more, sits in the temple of God. Let me say, in passing, that St Peter's at Rome was never the temple of God, nor ever will be. It has been called such, but it never could be. There will be a day when the Jews will rebuild Jehovah's temple at Jerusalem, and then this arrogant being springs up, and takes the place, not only of Christ — he asserts that he is Christ — but he usurps the place of God likewise. But what is his end? Isaiah 11: 4 foretells it briefly, while fuller detail is given here: — "Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Oh! I love to think of that, of the One that is going in that day to deal with this proud oppressor of God's earthly people, who has deceived many, while denying the truth of Jehovah, and the truth of Christianity. Satan thought he had done a wonderful thing when he got the Jews cast out of Palestine; he will think he has done a better thing still, when he has got the truth cast out, and the Word of God set aside, and his man exalted to the uttermost.

But then comes the moment, when the One who was the humble, lowly, self-emptied, dependent man, comes out, and is the consumer and destroyer of this wicked one! Yes, it is Jesus, my Saviour, that is going to do that. Is he your Saviour? Mark, you will have to be on the Lord's side, or you may be among those that are caught in the snare of the devil in that sorrowful day. Read the verse once more, — "Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders." Suppose the Lord came tonight, and you are left behind, unconverted, because unbelieving, do you think you will escape the snare? I do not believe it, because there will be such wonderful power and testimony. He will do what Jesus did. Compare Acts 2: 22 — "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him" — and you will find that what Jesus did, this man essays with "the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." The very same words are used in each case. Remember Elijah, with the prophets of Baal, when the question was put to them, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Let it be settled by fire, says Elijah," — the God that answereth by fire, let him be God." The votaries of Baal cried and prayed all day, and cut themselves with knives, but no answer came. Then what happened? Why, Elijah builds his altar, and souses it with water, that there might be no appearance of

deception, and he cries to the Lord, and fire comes out from heaven. This man will do the same (*see Rev. 13: 13*).

You will not escape the snare, my friends, if you are on the earth in that day. I recommend you to believe the truth now, because the apostle says he shall come "with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." I believe that when the antichrist comes there will be a wonderful number of conversions. Have you heard the news? will be the query. What? Christ has come! The tidings will spread; the news will be gladly received of the advent of a wonderful Christ. But what about the judgment to come? Oh! that is all a delusion; that myth to frighten fools has long been exposed and exploded. *The* Christ has come, the world's Christ, the Christ that men want, and there is no word about judgment; we may live as we like. Numbers of converts flock to the standard. They need not much persuasion; and, sinner, you, who might have been converted to the Christ of God, will be taken with the wiles and lies of a false Christ — the devil's Christ. If men will not believe the truth, they will have to believe a lie. Man is not self-supporting, or self-existing, and infidelity is such a dry, dreary, heartless thing, that in a while men will get tired of sheer infidelity; and when something comes with display and power, you will say, Oh! that is beautiful; that will suit me exactly. The bubble bursts, with appalling results. What results? "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness," is God's verdict, already gone out, against the hell-lured convert of antichrist. Let me say to you plainly, there is nothing but damnation ahead of you, if you do not turn to God, and get salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The coming of the Lord is the next thing for us who are saved; and then, if we are taken up — if the saints of God are called up, — there is nothing but this dark terrible delusion left for Christendom's Christless masses of unconverted professors of a Saviour they never have known, and then never can know! Do you suppose that if you have not believed God in the day of the Holy Ghost, if you have not believed the Gospel now, in the day when God is telling of His love, when the Holy Ghost is here working and pointing you to Jesus, if you do not receive the Gospel, and believe it now, when everybody is desirous for your blessing, — do you suppose that, when every possible influence and power under heaven, and out of hell, and on the earth, is against you, — do you suppose that you will believe the truth then? Listen. "That they all might be damned who BELIEVED NOT THE TRUTH, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Oh, may God save you from this terrible, strong delusion. Far better have the truth now. Christ is the truth; and the apostle goes on to say, "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and BELIEF OF THE TRUTH" (2 Thess. 2: 13).

How sweetly the warm-hearted apostle addresses the simple believers, and says, I have portrayed the dark future of the unbeliever, but I now turn with joy to what belongs to you. You have believed the truth, and you are entitled to know yourselves among the possessors of salvation. I would not stand here tonight, and not be a Christian, for ten thousand worlds, with all their wealth ten thousand times told. Nay, but I say to you tonight, if you never were a Christian before, come, seize your opportunity, turn to the Lord, believe in His name, rest on His blood, come to His loving open arms. Thus be ready for the Lord's return; and then, when He comes, you will be taken to be with Him, and you will be like Him, and with Him, for ever and ever. What a prospect! I say again, if you have been lingering or halting till tonight, come, and "join

Christ's waiting band," for that band has a title to glory without a flaw, and a prospect without a cloud