

Antichrist: The Beast from the Sea

Revelation 13:11-15

The Mark of the Beast

Revelation 13:16-18

The Great Tribulation

Matthew 24:21, 22

Jesus' Coming in Glory

Matthew 24:29-31

The General Resurrection

John 5:28, 29

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May 1, 2016 — No. 3826

May 29, 2016 — No. 3830

rection of those who have done *good* unto life, and a resurrection of those who have done *evil* unto damnation. What we have to do is look more closely at this verse and see that it teaches quite the opposite. The question is: When does this resurrection take place in the order of the events of the last day? The answer is: It takes place at the moment that Jesus returns, but before the final judgment. In Matthew 24 we read that when Jesus returns, He will send His angels to gather all from the four corners of the earth. Then, in Matthew 25, all these appear before the great white throne of judgment. The point is this, that this resurrection unto life and unto damnation takes place already prior to the judgment; already in their resurrection those who have done good and those who have done evil receive a body that is suited to their eternal destination.

So, there is a kind of a pre-judgment here. There is already a judgment that takes place at the moment of death. The souls of believers are taken immediately into glory and the souls of unbelievers depart into everlasting suffering. What this teaches, very clearly, is that even though our works are exposed in the judgment, and we are rewarded accordingly, this is not the determining factor on the

Judgment Day. The Judgment Day is not a day for God to figure out what each person deserves. God knows that. Rather, the Judgment Day is a vindication of the justice and the mercy of God. God will be seen as just in giving to unbelieving, reprobate men and women what they deserve eternally in hell. And God will be seen as merciful and gracious in pardoning His own for whom Jesus has given His blood.

So, Jesus is not talking in these verses about the cause of salvation, but is simply distinguishing for us the elect from the reprobate and telling us what marks them out from each other—the one group do good, the other do evil. Jesus says, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” This ought to encourage us as believers and to exhort us to a life of holiness and godliness. It ought to increase in us an earnest desire to live in a way that is pleasing to God, to live in a life of love and good works; not so we can rest in our works, for we rest alone in the grace of God, but as an expression of the life that we have, we who have heard the voice of Jesus Christ and have life.

So, the purpose of the general resurrection is the final judgment. About that we will say more in the next message.

rally, we have no ability to hear the gospel. Spiritually, we are deaf and blind to the things of God. But God comes, and He gives us ears and He gives us eternal life through our hearing of the Word of God. So, Jesus says, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming when the dead shall hear My voice and shall come forth.” That is simply an analogy of what takes place in the great work of salvation. So, what we see in these verses is this, that at the voice of Jesus Christ, on the last day, all the dead will rise and come forth from their graves.

In verse 29, we see what the purpose of this resurrection will be. Not here that there are two types of resurrection. They are simultaneous, but there are so very different from each other. How will they come forth from their grave, those who hear His voice? One group of them will come forth unto the resurrection of life (v. 29) and the other unto the resurrection of damnation. What that means is this: that every human will be raised with a body that is suited to his or her eternal destiny. The body of the believer will be suited for heaven. It will be perfect and sinless, it will be spiritual and eternal, what Paul calls in I Corinthians 15 incorruptible, immortal, spiritual, and heavenly. Our bodies will be raised to be like the body of Jesus Christ. When we see Him in that day, then we will be like Him.

But there is also a resurrection of damnation. For the wicked and unbelieving, their bodies will be raised to suffer eternally in hell. That means that their resurrected bodies will be given a different power than they possess in the present. If a person, in the body that he has now in his present, earthly existence were to go to hell, he would soon be annihilated. The human body could not endure the sufferings and the torments of hell. But there is an eternity in the soul of man, and when Jesus comes again, He will put that eternity into the bodies of those who have done evil. They will be raised, those bodies will, to be suited to eternal torment in hell. Hell has been described as the place where you want to die, but death never comes. Jesus says, “There will be a resurrection of damnation.”

What we see here again is the absolute power and authority of Jesus Christ in His exalted state. He not only has the power to raise bodies and to give life to them, but He has power even over the bodies of those who do not obey the gospel. What a dreadful power belongs to our Savior.

One of the main questions that people ask about this verse (v. 29) is this: Does Jesus teach here a salvation by works? He speaks here of the Judgment Day and He speaks of a resur-

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

May 1, 2016
No. 3826

Antichrist: The Beast from the Earth
Rev. Rodney Kley

Dear radio friends,

In this series of messages on the Reformed Witness Hour we have been considering the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ. Most recently we began to look at the sign of Antichrist in the New Testament and we looked at that from II Thessalonians 2 and the first verses in Revelation 13. In looking at the Antichrist, we have seen that though the Antichrist will be a future reality, the spirit of Antichrist is always present in the world. So, we have to watch against that spirit. We have also seen that though the Antichrist will be an individual, one person at the end of the world, he will not stand alone but will represent all that is opposed to Christ, indeed, all of unbelieving humanity.

In today’s message, we will see that, though the Antichrist is a political ruler, there will be a religious aspect to his kingdom. Though the Antichrist is referred to as a beast, representing the dragon, he will come as a lamb with deceit. That is because he comes as a pseudo-Christ—in the stead of and in the place of the true Christ.

In our message the last time, we looked at the first ten

verses of Revelation 13. We stood with John on the shore and we watched a beast with seven heads and ten horns rise out of the tumultuous sea as a ruler of the nations of the earth. Now in verse 11 of Revelation 13, with John, we turn and we see a beast rise out of the earth. Revelation 13:11-15 reads:

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. 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. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would

not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

Perhaps as we get into this, the most important thing for us to understand about this second beast is that he does not represent a kingdom or a ruler separate from the first beast. Instead, this second beast is a part of or aspect of the kingdom of Antichrist. He comes under Antichrist with the same purpose, fighting for the same cause. Just as the first beast receives his power from the dragon and represents the cause of the dragon, so this second beast receives his power from and represents the cause of the first beast. You see that in verse 12: “he exerciseth all the power of the first beast” —

he receives his power and he serves the cause of the Antichrist. That is

The false prophet in the book of Revelation is false Christianity. It is all the false religions of the world come together as one unified force.

clear also in the second part of verse 12 that says, he causes all that dwell on the earth to worship the first beast. He wants to create a following of the Antichrist. So verse 14 says that he did miracles in the sight of the beast, or more literally, in behalf of, or as a herald of, the first beast.

Who is this second beast? What does this second beast

represent? In Revelation 17 you have a similar vision. Only, in Revelation 17, you have one beast, the first beast with the seven heads and the ten horns, and then a woman riding the beast. That woman is the second beast here in Revelation 13. In Revelation 19:20 this second beast is called “the false prophet.” We read this in Revelation 19:20, “And the beast 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.” So Revelation 19:20 calls the second beast the false prophet. The false prophet in the book of Revelation is false Christianity.

It is all the false religions of the world come together as one unified force. It is all the thought and all the religion and all the ideology of man that is false. What makes it false is this, that it is disconnected from God’s revelation in the Scriptures, from Jesus Christ, and is, in fact, opposed to Jesus Christ.

So we see in the second beast the religious aspect of the kingdom of Antichrist—the union of all the religions of the earth, in

rection take place? Sometimes we wonder about that question. We think of how the body decays in the grave. We think, perhaps, of bodies that have disintegrated in death or have been burned and we wonder, how can this general resurrection, how can this literal, bodily resurrection take place? We see how in the words of the text. Jesus says, “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.” It is by the voice, simply by the voice of Jesus Christ. That is the power of the voice of Jesus.

Now, just think of Jesus’ raising of Lazarus from the dead. He said, after the tombstone had been rolled back, “Lazarus, come forth,” and Lazarus arose and came forth. It has been said that Jesus, when He raised Lazarus from the dead, spoke his name (Lazarus) first because otherwise all who were in their graves would have come forth on that day. On the day when Jesus comes again, He will say the word, “Come forth, arise from the dead,” and all will come forth from their graves. This voice is called elsewhere (I Cor. 15:52) the “trump of God.” “The trump of God will sound, and the dead will be raised.” Now, Jesus’ point is, if He can do that, if He can raise the dead by His voice at the last day, marvel not at this, do not be surprised at this, that a lame man is able to walk at His command.

So Jesus will return on that last day and He will speak a word that will bring life to all who are in their graves. That is a beautiful thought, and it is a wonderful analogy to what He does in the work of our salvation. On the final day, your dead body and mine, which lie in their graves, which have lost all of their function and ability to hear or to do anything, which have decomposed—on that final day, Christ will speak, and His voice will wake these dead bodies from the grave. Martin Luther pictured it this way. He says, “Just as Jesus said, ‘Lazarus, come forth,’ so He would come and He would say on the great resurrection morning, ‘Dr. Luther, wake up.’” I say that is a wonderful analogy of the power of the gospel. Jesus makes that point also in the context in verses 24 and 25. He uses similar language. He says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” That is the same kind of language. But Jesus adds: “Now is.” “The hour is coming, and now is.” He means that the voice that He speaks as He proclaims the gospel is heard and believed; and as people believe, they are given, not just physical life, but eternal life in their souls.

So He speaks here of the work of regeneration. Natu-

In Acts 24:15, “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” That day, the day of the resurrection of God’s people, will be the last day. Jesus says in John 6:40 concerning the resurrection of believers: “I will raise him up at the last day.” This resurrection does not take place some thousand years before the last day but it takes place at the last day. The resurrection is of *all* at the moment of Christ’s return, which is the last day.

So, the general resurrection is a future resurrection at a specific day and moment, the day and moment when Jesus returns with the sound of the trumpet and the voice of the archangel of God. That is the last day of the history of this world.

But the main point that Jesus is making here in the passage is how this resurrection will take place. Jesus is not talking here so much about the end times but He is having a discussion with the Jewish leaders, especially the Pharisees, about His authority and power. Earlier in the chapter Jesus had healed a man at the pool of Bethesda. The miracles that Jesus performed caused the multitudes to follow Him. The leaders were unable to withstand or deny the power of Jesus. So they tried to discredit what Jesus was doing by turning it into a dispute about something

different. Here they turn it into a dispute about the Sabbath because Jesus had healed this man on the Sabbath. Just as He does so often, Jesus brings this back to the real issue. The real issue is not Sabbath observance but His authority. The miracles demonstrate who He is. So, in verse 17, Jesus says, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” He is saying that the power by which He did His miracles was a divine power and that He was sent of God into this world. This brings the Jewish leaders back to the real issue. That makes them upset. In verse 18 we read that they are upset not only because He had done this on the Sabbath, but because He had called God His Father, making claim that He Himself was God.

So, Jesus says to them, “Well, what you’ve seen me do so far is really nothing in comparison to what I will do and what I am able to do.” In the intervening verses, He speaks of His power, which will be displayed in the judgment of this world, and that is shown in His ability to raise people from the dead. Here Jesus is saying to the Jewish leaders, “What you see me do here in the healing of this man at the pool of Bethesda pales in comparison to what you will see me do in the future.”

The question is: How will Jesus raise the dead? By what power does this general resur-

the end, as a part of the Antichrist’s kingdom. It is not just a religion that is against Christ or that is antichristian, but a religion that is of the Antichrist himself because the Antichrist will take the place of God and, as a man, will be worshiped. That is the aim of the devil and all the antichristian spirit that is in the world throughout history—to subject the thinking of religious people, and especially of those who call themselves Christians, to one, central, false religion of man that is against Christ. This will be combined with the political power of the kingdom of Antichrist. We must be aware of and watch for this spirit in every age.

Before we look more closely at the second beast here and a description of who he is, I think there is an important lesson and principle for us to see. That is that the union of church and state is antichristian. That there must be an institutional separation of the state and the church, of religion and of politics. The civil government has no business dictating religion. Yes, it must allow the people of God freedom to worship, but the church and believers are bound in the end only by God’s Word. That is true in the education of our children. That is true in morality and moral issues or family values, in economics. In every area of life, we ought to obey God rather than men.

That is because, even though the government is bound by the Word of God and, in a sense, represents God’s own authority and rule, the government is not able to and is not called to represent the spiritual rule of Jesus Christ in this world. This is the church’s work. It is the church’s work to preach the gospel; it is the church’s work to declare what is truth; the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. What we see as we look at history is that it has usually been the case that governments are corrupt; that generally they are led by wicked men; and so they are antichristian. They arise out of the sea of the nations, out of the tumult of politics and the turmoil of social affairs. Out of them comes the Antichrist himself. This is the spirit of the Antichrist that is always present there.

It is important for us to recognize this not only so that we maintain a separation in the religious aspect of our life from the government of the land, but also so that we do not put our confidence in government; that we do not trust kings and princes; but rather that we trust in Jesus Christ.

This has important application in the political developments of our own land in the last year or so. You look, for example, at the decision of the Supreme Court concerning the

homosexual marriage. Or you look at the push in our society to accept immoral lifestyles. You see that it is going to come to the point where the church will say “No,” to the demands that the government places upon it. When that happens, we should not throw up our hands, as God’s people, as though our situation is hopeless. We must remember that Christ is King, that He rules by His grace and Spirit and Word in and through the church, and that there is a spiritual rule in the church that the government cannot touch. Jesus says, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

As we look at this second beast, we see that there are some differences from the first beast. Yes, he is similar to the first beast, he is a beast with power—not just an animal but a fearsome creature—a fearsome creature that has power similar to that of the first beast. But notice also the differences, striking differences, that indicate how this second beast operates in the service of the first. He is different in his origin. The first beast rises out of the sea, which represents the tumult and the turmoil of the nations. In contrast, this second beast arises out of the earth. The earth is man’s beautiful home. You think of the beauty of the earth and then you think of man living in the earth. This is the place

to which man is adapted to live. John turns from the tumultuous sea and he sees instead the rolling green hills. This beast arises out of the earth, not as a terrifying beast, but as a lamb that comes out of the stable, serene environment of the earth. This tells us about the religious aspect of Antichrist. He arises out of religions that seek peace and that promise serenity while the nations rage. This is what religion does—it offers peace to man. The Antichrist will come and will unite to his political power this religious aspect and will offer a universal solution to the tumult of the nations in a religion. He will be humanitarian; he will offer world peace; he will equalize financial disparity in the world; and he will offer people a religion that will give them peace of mind.

In the second place, this second beast differs from the first in his appearance. Whereas the first in his appearance is a horrific beast that appears with seven heads and ten horns out of the tumultuous sea and represents the dragon himself, the second beast, who comes out of the earth, is a lamb. He takes the appearance of Jesus Christ. He is a pseudo-Christ. He is gentle. He is domesticated. He is not a dragon, but a pet. Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:15 that we should beware of false prophets that come to us in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravening

this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” “The last day,” Jesus will raise all believers. I Corinthians 15:52 speaks this way: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” That trumpet is the sound of the return of Jesus Christ. I Thessalonians 4:16: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” So, this general resurrection will take place at a specific moment in the future—an hour—and all the dead will rise.

I emphasize here that this will include *all* the dead. “All who are in their graves will come forth,” Jesus says. Everyone who has ever died, from the first man—the righteous Abel, who was murdered by his brother Cain—through Adam and Eve and Abraham and Joseph and David and every Bible character. Everyone who has died throughout all of history, all the great names of history, all the unknown and forgotten people, billions of men and women, young and old, boys and girls, infants; those buried thousands of years ago whose bodies have

long returned to dust; those who have been burned up in the fire; those who have become fish-food, drowned at sea; those who have become worm food buried in the earth; those dismembered and blown apart in war; those from unknown, ancient civilizations; those from far-flung corners of the earth; those gassed by the millions by Hitler’s regime; and those millions of aborted babies of our modern society. All shall come forth. That means that you will be there and I will be there, whether we live till the last day comes or whether our bodies return to the dust and our souls to God who gave it; whether death comes to us through the process of pain or suffering or comes quite suddenly; whether we die young or old and full of years; whether you are a believer or an unbeliever; all of us will stand in that day in that great “getting-up morning.”

I emphasize “all” because some teach that there are multiple resurrections in the future, that there is first the resurrection and rapture of all believers. Then, one thousand or so years later there is another resurrection of the wicked for judgment. Here it is very clear that this will take place at one moment, that this is one event. Jesus said, “The hour cometh.” Then He speaks of the resurrection of both the just and the unjust happening simultaneously. That is supported elsewhere in Scripture.

shall come forth.” He does not mean to limit this resurrection to those who are buried in graves, but this is a way of speaking of all who have died. He refers to the earthly remains of all. To be in the grave is to die. This is what we do when someone dies. At the moment of death there is a vicious rending of soul from body. The soul departs and returns to God who made it. Here on the earth we are left with a body, a corpse, a lifeless empty shell. Usually we bury it, lovingly putting it in the grave. When we stand at the grave, the reality of death hits us. But now, the point that Jesus is making here is that the grave is not the end. In I Corinthians 15 the apostle shouts triumphantly, “O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory?” The grave, in the end, does not have the victory because Jesus Himself entered into the grave and overcame the power of death. So the body that is buried in the grave, your body and my body, will be raised. Paul speaks of this identity between the present body and the resurrection body. He says, this body is sown. But this body is also raised. The substance is the same. It is sown and *it* is raised. Now, just as Jesus was raised from the grave in the same body in which He was buried, so we will retain a personal identity in the future resurrection. Job says, “Though after my skin

worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” So first we recognize here a literal, bodily resurrection.

Secondly, when we speak of a general resurrection, we mean that everyone who ever lived will be raised from the dead. The resurrection will be universal. We see that very clearly in these verses. Verse 28 refers to all: “the hour is coming, in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.” Verse 29 describes who these all are: “they that have done good...and they that have done evil.” In other words, this will be a resurrection not just of God’s people, not just of the elect, but also of unbelievers—the reprobate.

Third, the general resurrection will happen at a specific moment in history. Jesus says in verse 28: “for the hour is coming.” He points thus to a specific moment in future history. God has appointed, God has designated, an hour when this will happen.

When will that hour be? It will be at the moment when Jesus returns on the clouds of heaven. That is also designated in Scripture as an hour. That is not mentioned specifically here in Jesus’ discussion in John 5 because here He is not talking about the end times so much as His authority. But, if we turn to John 6:40, Jesus says, “And

wolves. In fact, the Bible tells us that the devil himself will appear as an angel of light. So the Antichrist will come with his religious deceit.

Third, we notice that this second beast differs from the first in his power. Yes, he comes with power, but he does not come with a military power; he does not come with the power of the sword and death, but his power is a power of words, a power of persuasion, a power of deception. He speaks as a prophet. A prophet is a representative of God, an ambassador. This is the way he comes with his deceit.

Fourth, we notice that his speech is different from the first. The first beast has the mouth of a lion and he speaks great things and blasphemies against God and against the people of God. He expresses the wrath of the dragon. The second beast is given a mouth, too, and speech. But his is the speech of smooth deception that matches his presentation as a lamb. Yes, in verse 11 he speaks as a dragon. But that does not mean he is a fire-breathing lamb. Instead it refers to the content of what he says. It is the same lie of the serpent but he comes with deceit. He will do the same work as the first beast, but his manner and approach will be so different.

The power of the deceit of the second beast, the religious aspect of the kingdom

of Antichrist, is this, that he understands man. He rises out of the earth, man’s domain. He understands that man is religious, a religious creature, and so he will seek to satisfy man’s need for dependence on a deity. He understands the social and societal needs of man and he will seek to bring an answer to those. He understands that a man cannot be wooed and ruled by coercion and so he will come with great promises and bring the nations under his sway.

What is his purpose? His purpose is twofold. In the first place his purpose is to bring the nations of the world together in one religion and to deceive them into worshipping the beast. Verse 12: “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.” You notice what is mentioned there as well—the healing of the wound. This refers to a religious unity. As long as the beast is wounded, this unity cannot come. But once this wound is healed, then the beast will bring unity between the religions of the earth. There will be a religious unity as well as a political unity in the kingdom of Antichrist. All of this, to serve the ultimate purpose of this second beast, which is to destroy the saints of God and the elect in the earth, as it says at the end of verse 15: to kill all those who will not worship the

beast, who, according to verse 8, had their names written in the book of life.

The way that this second beast will do this is by means of tribulation and the mark of the beast. We will talk about those in upcoming messages. But here we see that he is especially opposed to Jesus Christ, and he breathes out his hatred against the church because he is against Jesus Christ. We, of course, can trace that all through history—all the way back to before the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, when the devil started a revolt in heaven. It is because he hates God, the purpose of God to send Jesus Christ, and the cause of Jesus Christ in the world that he comes against the people of God. God has cast him out of heaven. Jesus, the child in chapter 12, has been caught up into heaven, and so the devil pours out his fury against the church of Jesus Christ and against what Revelation 12 calls the remnant of the seed of the woman who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. The devil knows that to attack the church and to inflict damage on the people of God is to attack Jesus Christ Himself and to inflict damage on Him. This is the bruising of the heel of the seed of the woman. If the devil can destroy the seed of Christ, if he can steal away one of those for whom Jesus has given His life-blood, if he can take one

name out of the Book of Life, then he has undermined God's work, and that is his goal. This is the kingdom and the religion of Antichrist. Yes, it is about man. Yes, it worships the first beast. But the main purpose of it is to defeat God and His cause in this world.

From an earthly point of view, this second beast is going to be quite successful in the establishment of this worldwide religion. Not only earlier in the chapter, but also here in verses 15 and 16, we see that all the people of the earth wonder after the beast and they worship the beast. A religion of Antichrist is set up. The abomination of desolation, which Jesus speaks of in Matthew 24:15, comes. In II Thessalonians 2, he sets himself up in the temple of God as God, so that he is worshiped in the place of God. A part of the success of the second beast in getting all the nations to worship the first beast will be his ability to perform miracles. There will be a certain "wow-factor" to the work of this second beast. He will be able to call fire from heaven; he will make an image of the beast that will speak. We should understand those as real miracles, what are called in II Thessalonians 2 "signs and lying wonders," or "wonders of the lie." Every new prophet and every new revelation claims authenticity by the performing of miracles. This is

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

May 29, 2016
No. 3830

The General Resurrection
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

As Christians in this world, we live in hope. Here, we are pilgrims and strangers. Heaven is our home, and we do not seek our ultimate fulfillment in the present earthly life. One aspect of our hope, and what makes the Christian hope altogether unique, is the future, bodily resurrection. The Christian does not only believe in an after-life in which, after our death, our souls will continue to exist in heaven. But we believe, based on the Scriptures, that our earthly bodies in which we live today will be raised from the decay and dust of the grave and that, in our flesh, we will see God. Death and the grave are not the end for our bodies. The grave will not have the victory. To die as a believer, to die in the Lord, and to die in hope, means that our bodies will be raised and be made like unto the glorious body of Jesus Christ. That is our hope. At the moment when Jesus returns on the clouds of heaven, His first work will be to raise our bodies from the grave and to fashion them like to His glorious body in order to bring us to eternal glory with Himself.

That is our subject today. In this series of messages on the end times, we have been looking at the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ. Last time, in this series, we looked at the sign of the Son of man—the visible, bodily return of Jesus Christ on the clouds of heaven. In this message, and in subsequent messages, we will look at what happens beyond the return of Jesus Christ. The first thing that takes place at the return of Christ is the general resurrection of the dead.

We consider this today from the gospel of John 5:28 and 29. Jesus says there: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." I have titled this message, "The General Resurrection." When we speak of a general resurrection, we mean these three things. First, that our bodies will literally be raised from the grave. Jesus says here, "they that are in the graves..."

world belongs to God, that in God we live and move and have our being. There will be in that day no more time for repentance, no more to be brought to faith, but only terror before the wrath of the Lamb.

It is quite striking in Scripture that

God's people in that day will respond quite differently. They will see and experience all the same things in the last day: the stars falling from the heavens, the mountains being rent, the great cataclysm. But God's people will not be terrified. Luke 21 depicts them as still, restful, and expectant: "Life up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh," Jesus says, "when you see all these things." It will not be a day for God's people to gloat in the destruction of the wicked. No, because that day will not be about us, it will not be our day. It is the day of the Lord. We will glory, but we will glory in the fact that God is honored, that God is vindicated in that day. That is the longing in the heart of every child of God, that God receives the glory.

But we will rejoice in that

day. God's people will rejoice and have this different response because, as the bride of Christ, they wait for the groom to appear. All the experiences of

*All the glory of Christ
will be ours in that day,
for when we shall see Him,
we shall be like Him.*

the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ that they will have gone through will have spiritually prepared

them for this day. In their tribulation, when a loved one is killed, when the church is scattered as a result of persecution so that it is hardly able to worship anymore, when God's people experience hunger and nakedness and they have to hide in the dens and caves of the earth, all of these things God will use to keep them spiritually alert and awake and watching and longing for the day of Jesus Christ, crying out: "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly." Because in the end, that is the Christian hope—the day of the coming of Jesus Christ. Our hope is not found in anything here on the earth but in the day when Jesus comes. What a glorious day that will be! We will see Him in His glory, and, seeing Him, we will be made like Him. Our prayer is: "Come, Lord Jesus, Amen."

what the beast will do—he will seek to demonstrate that the first beast is a deity. He will try, by his persecution, to put fear in the hearts of God's people at the same time. This fear will create a separation between true and false believers, so that the church will be purged of hypocrisy. This is not something that the people of God will have to fear. In persecution, there will be a blessing that will come to the church and people of God.

Think today of the church that is under persecution. In the world the church usually finds itself in one of two situations—either under the sword of persecution or under the deceit of false teaching and the persuasion and the temptation of a materialistic and humanistic society. When the church today that is under persecution looks out at the church in the West that we are a part of, and it sees the temptation and the world-

liness, it prays for us. It is strong under persecution and it prays for the church under prosperity. You see, persecution, in the end, will not be bad for God's people. But this will be a part of the power that this second beast wields against God's people.

But the real power and the real weapon of the Antichrist in this second beast will be that he gives power to this lamb to speak. This speaking is false teaching. With war and guns and bombs, man puts fear into the hearts of other men. But the Antichrist will realize that he will not get people to follow him by bringing them under physical coercion. Instead, he will come as a lamb. He will use every tool he can to communicate his message. He will use education; he will use the media; he will use the arts; he will use science; he will use civil rights; he will use politics—all of these things pressed into the service of his one religion, to bring man together behind his cause, the cause of Antichrist—a religion that exalts

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man, a religion of materialism, a religion of humanism in which not only is the beast worshiped, but man himself is exalted, a religion that is against Jesus Christ.

We need to be warned so that we are not deceived and so that we are watching. This is why Jesus tells us about this second beast—the religious aspect of Antichrist, so that we are aware. In our day and age it is easy for us to be tempted and entertained and mesmerized

by what the world has to offer. Think of what is offered by science and by pleasure and by money and by peace. These things are so attractive to us. The Antichrist, when he comes, will hold all this out as the answer to every dream and every hope that man has ever had.

This is the spirit of Antichrist. Are we caught up in it, or are we watching? Does the world come into our homes through media, Internet, television, entertainment, reading? Do we realize that the world is not neutral, that the things of this culture in which we live are not neutral? Jesus said, "If they are not for us, they are against us." In all these things is the spirit of Antichrist, and believers are called to a spiritual separation from the world, so that we do not participate in the culture of the godless world around us.

But not only is there a warning here, there is also comfort. The comfort is this: as God's people, we cannot be deceived. There is a remnant of elect spoken of here, whose names are in the Book of Life and who are not deceived. Yes, the Bible says, if it were possible, they would be deceived. Almost deceived, Jesus says in Matthew 24. But this is impossible. It is impossible because their names are written in the Book of Life, the book of the Lamb (v. 8). So the days of the Antichrist,

Jesus says in Matthew 24, will be shortened. Satan may have a temporary victory over the seed of the woman here on the earth. But those days will be shortened—verse 5, forty-two months (three and a half years), times-time-and-half-a-time—not a complete picture but a half a picture. The Antichrist and his kingdom will come to a sudden end. Jesus will come (II Thess. 2) and destroy him with the brightness of His coming. So God's people need not be afraid. Instead, we should look to Jesus Christ, who is on the throne throughout all of history and who rules over the Antichrist. We realize that the Antichrist himself is sent by Jesus Christ in preparation for His coming and that he himself serves the coming of Jesus Christ.

So, we must keep our eye on Jesus Christ, who is King on the throne in heaven. When we see these things taking place, as Jesus says in the gospel according to Luke, we lift our eyes and we know that our redemption draws nigh. That is our hope, even in the midst of an antichristian world.

Let us pray.

Father, keep us from being deceived by the spirit of Antichrist that is present always in the world. We pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly." Amen.

will see Him. He will come in the glory of His exalted position at God's right hand. He has been given a name that is above every name and the glory of the Father and a seat at God's right hand and everything has been placed under His feet. Then He will come, as Psalm 2 has it, with a rod of iron, and He will come to judge the nations. We, as God's people, will see and experience the glory of Jesus Christ in the things that He immediately does at His coming.

We are going to look at some of those things in the upcoming messages, the things that will happen after Jesus comes again, but that glory will be the gathering of His church, the resurrection of the dead, the final Judgment Day, the vindication of God in the destruction of the devil and the wicked in hell, and the glorious re-creation of a new heaven and a new earth. All the glory of Christ will be ours in that day, for when we shall see Him, we shall be like Him. An important part of the miracle is this, that it will all take place in an instant, in the snap of one's fingers. I Corinthians 15:52 says, "In a moment, in the twinkling of the eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall

be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

*The curtains of heaven
will be pulled back,
and then shall appear the sign
of the Son of man.*

Now we see in the text a response to this coming—a mixed response. "All the tribes of the earth shall mourn." This refers to those who hate Christ and hate the gospel, who have received the mark of the beast and worship his image, from every part of the earth—all those who wonder after the beast. The sudden coming of Jesus Christ will make something very clear to him—that there is no escaping the wrath of God. Malachi 3:2 says this, "Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth. For he is like a refiner's fire." What will put fear in the heart of man in that day is the collapse of this physical universe. Man depends on the stability of this natural world. In his human wisdom, he has put God out of the universe and he sees himself as the ruler of the waters and the mountains and the skies in this universe. He makes this world and the universe his god and he worships the creature rather than the Creator. But suddenly, when Christ comes on the clouds of heaven and the powers of the heaven are shaken, it will be clear that this world is not God but that this

away but, because he is a faithful servant, he is always ready for the return of his master. Or the ten virgins in the next chapter and the five who are ready. The coming of Jesus Christ will be sudden, but not in this way, that it will be terrifyingly sudden for God's people but something that we are watching for because we do not know the exact day or the hour.

The third truth concerning the coming of Jesus Christ is this, that it will be public and visible. Jesus says concerning His coming that the tribes of the earth shall see Him coming in the clouds. In Revelation 1:7: "Every eye shall see him, also those who pierced him." The public, visible coming of Jesus Christ will bring everything in this world to a grinding halt. Man is busy with all the activity of his life, going here and there. Then, suddenly, Jesus will appear and every eye will see Him. Think of a day when a nation is attacked, for example, September 11. Or December 7, when Pearl Harbor was attacked. On that Sunday morning, people were out taking their jogs and exercising. Some were doing laundry. Others were worshiping out in the open in Hawaii. Then suddenly this attack came and everything

came to a halt. So it will be on the day when Jesus will come. It will be a public and visible coming. Every eye shall see Him. Perhaps we wonder how that can be because the earth is round. How could every eye on that day see Him?

That points to the fourth truth concerning His coming, and that is that it will be a miraculous event. Every eye will see Him. That will not be by news report or television or streaming over the Internet. No, every eye will see Him. The naked eye will see Him. Every eye in all of the earth will see Him. We cannot explain how that will be and we do not need to—just to say that it is a miracle. Jesus says in Matthew 24:27 that it will be like a flash of lightning that goes from one end to the other end of the sky. The curtains of heaven will be pulled back and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man.

The fifth truth concerning His coming here is that it will be glorious. It will not be like His first coming, in which only a few people saw Him come, and in which He came into the lowliness and humiliation of Bethlehem. But He will come on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory. And every eye

The public, visible coming of Jesus Christ will bring everything in this world to a grinding halt.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

May 8, 2016
No. 3827

The Mark of the Beast
Rev. Rodney Kleyon

Dear Radio Friends,

In our recent messages, we have looked at the subject of the Antichrist from Scripture. We have noticed that the Antichrist is an individual who will come in the future as a political ruler with a worldwide kingdom of peace and prosperity. We have also seen that there is a religious dimension to the kingdom of Antichrist. The Antichrist will set himself up as God and he will be the object of man's worship. False religions of the earth will support him and his kingdom.

We have seen this about the Antichrist in Revelation 13 in the two beasts—the beast that comes from the sea and the beast from the earth. These two beasts do not represent two different kingdoms or two different periods of time, but they stand together as one in the service of the dragon, who is the devil. The first beast, from the sea, is the culmination of the world powers in opposition to the kingdom of Jesus Christ and His church under one man who is the Antichrist. The second beast, the beast from the earth, represents the false church that serves the

Antichrist and the first beast. He does this by enforcing the worship of the Antichrist, the beast. This worship he enforces by miracles and by false teaching.

Today we come to look at another aspect of the Antichrist, and that is what is called "the mark of the beast." We read in Revelation 13:16ff., concerning the second beast, the false religion, that he "causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."

It is important for us in connection with the subject of Antichrist to consider the mark of the beast—not only because this is an extremely controversial subject and, perhaps, one that you do not understand but also because the mark of

the beast is another sign that Jesus Christ gives of the end of the world and His coming. This is a sign not only for that at the very end or for those who are left behind after a supposed rapture but, like the other signs, this is a sign that is always present in the world. That is why there is a calling in the text to be wise. “Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast.”

There is also comfort for us in considering the mark of the beast. The text speaks of terrible days of great tribulation for those who do not have the mark of the beast. But in this mark there is also a comfort for us, God’s people.

If you tuned to the radio today or looked at this passage or downloaded this message wanting to know what specifically is the mark of the beast, you are going to be disappointed. The text that we read does not tell us what this mark is. Instead, it tells us what this mark represents. Of course, there are many throughout history in the church who have tried to identify the mark. Some focus on the mark itself and they say that the mark will be some kind of an advancement in technology, perhaps an electronic chip or something like that, a GPS sensor or something that will be embedded into the flesh of men and women, or it may be some visible tattoo, or,

some have even said, a social security number or credit cards are the mark of the beast and that those who refuse to receive these are the true people of God. While it is true that all forms of technology will be at the disposal of the Antichrist, the mark itself is not identified in the passage.

Others try to focus on the name. The mark is called in the passage “the name of the beast.” They have tried to identify, from this passage, who the Antichrist will be. Six-six-six is his name. They have taken that as a hidden code and suggest that you have to figure out the letter-value of different things in either the Greek or the Hebrew or the Latin alphabet. You can identify, then, who the Antichrist will be. Some think they have unlocked this mystery by identifying the Antichrist as Nero, or as the pope, or some have even said Bonnie, the purple dinosaur, or in our day, even the present president of the United States. But it is none of those things. Instead, the mark of the beast simply represents something. It is not literal and it is not a hidden code.

We have to remember, as we come to this passage, some important principles for interpreting Scripture and understanding the book of Revelation. We must let Scripture interpret Scripture. Whatever this passage means, it must

truths about the coming of Jesus Christ. First, it will be a personal coming. That is, Jesus Himself will come on the clouds of heaven. I Thessalonians 4:16, “The Lord Himself shall descend with a shout.” He will come, not only so that there will be a personal showdown between Him and the Antichrist in that day, but He will come especially to meet His bride. This is what His bride, the church, is waiting for. As believers in the church, we do not wait for the end of the world just so that our suffering may end or for freedom from sin or for the bliss of the new heaven and the new earth or even just to be reunited with our loved ones who have passed away, but our hope is to see Jesus Himself. In many ways, that is the measure of our faith. What is your faith and what is your hope in this world? That is, what are you waiting for? What are you longing for? As a believer, you long to see Jesus. That is heaven—to be ever with the Lord. This will be a personal coming. Jesus says: “I go to prepare a place for you; and I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14). So, first, it will be a personal coming.

The second truth concerning the coming of Jesus Christ is that it will be a sudden coming.

You have that here in Matthew 24 in two different ways. The first is a rapid succession of events leading up to the coming of Jesus Christ and the sign. In verses 29 and 30, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.” There is a rapid succession of events. Those days, we read earlier in the chapter, verse 22, will be shortened. They will come to a sudden end. But the other thing that indicates the suddenness of the coming of Jesus Christ here is that Jesus says three different times in Matthew 24 that no one knows the day or the hour and that He will come as a thief in the night. This calls us as believers in the earth to be watching and ready continually for the day of Jesus

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Christ. This is the point of Jesus’ further instruction in this chapter and in the following one in parables. He

speaks of the parable of the fig trees and the sign of spring in the fig tree and says, “Watch.” Or, the watchman who does not know when the thief will come so he is always alert. Or the servant whose master is gone

Now the coming of Jesus Christ is described here in these words: “the sign of the Son of man in heaven.” What is this sign? This sign does not refer simply to some signal or sound to announce the arrival of Jesus Christ. Certainly there will be a great sound: the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. You can imagine the noise as this universe disintegrates. But this sign does not refer to that. Nor does it refer to some sign that God will place in the sky to show the redemption of Christians, perhaps, as some see it, a sign or symbol of the cross. No. This sign will be... Christ Himself.

Understand what a sign is. A sign is a visible representation of a spiritual reality. The spiritual reality, the invisible reality, that we will get a glimpse into on that day is the reality of heaven. Heaven is not something that is distant from us, but simply this, something that we do not see. Think of Elisha’s servant in II Kings 6. His eyes were opened and he was able to see the angels that surrounded the city. This was the spiritual reality that he did not see. It was not that the angels came just then but the angels were always there. His eyes were opened to see them. The idea is that in the last day, when the sign of the Son of man comes, God will make visible to man what is invisible to the natural eye. The realities of

heaven will be displayed. As Revelation 6:14 has it, “The heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” Or, as Isaiah 64:1 puts it: “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.” The sign, the thing that we will see in that day, the spiritual reality, will be Jesus Christ Himself in His exalted glory.

So Jesus refers to this sign as the sign of the Son of man. This title, “Son of man,” is Jesus’ favorite self-designation. It does not refer simply to the fact that Jesus was human, had a human nature, that He was born of a man or a woman, but it refers to the fact that Jesus is the exalted Messiah. It refers to the glory that He would receive in His human nature. In Daniel 7:13, 14 we have the Old Testament use of this name that Jesus adopts for Himself: “I saw one like to the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days, and dominion was given to him,” Daniel says. This is a prophecy of the ascension and the glory of Jesus Christ in His ascension. We will see the sign of the Son of man, that is, the curtains of heaven will be rolled back, there will be a revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ.

The verse tells us five

not contradict the rest of the Scriptures and it cannot stand alone in Scripture. Rather, this prophecy is built on the prophecy of Daniel and Jesus’ own teaching concerning the end of the world.

Then we have to remember that the book of Revelation is a book of symbols. It is not to be taken literally. All the numbers in the book of Revelation are figurative. They represent something. So you have numbers such as twelve and ten and one thousand and seven or combinations of these in the book of Revelation. Here we have the number six. This number, we are told, is the number of man. As we look at these verses, we see that the emphasis falls on the number, not on the mark and not on the name. The mark of the beast in verse 16 is called in verse 17 the number of the name of the beast. Then the number is identified in verse 18. It is the number of a man and his number is six hundred and threescore and six. That is six hundred, sixty-six. We do not know what the mark is. We do not know what the name of the beast is, but we do know the number here.

So we are called to count this number, that is, to interpret it—not with complicated formu-

las and math, but with wisdom, which is God-given insight and spiritual understanding of His Word in the context of the world and the last days. In one word, this number represents man; 666 is the number of man. We do not have to go anywhere else to figure out the symbolism. It is right here in this passage. This is the number of the Antichrist. This is the name of the Antichrist. His name refers to his character. Six-six-six: man-man-man is what the kingdom of Antichrist will be all about. This number identifies those who receive it with that kingdom of Antichrist. The repetition of the number six is to emphasize the character. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty (Is. 6). This chorus of the heavenly angels identifies God’s character as holy. Six-six-six, this repetition identifies the character not only of the Antichrist, but of all who follow him.

We see elsewhere in Scripture that six is the number of man. On the sixth day God created man. The seventh day, in contrast, is the day in which God rested and man was to put away all his labor and the labor of the earth in order to find his rest in God. Six represents man and the entire created world without its rest in God. It is man apart

		Six-six-six; man-man-man		
		is what the kingdom of		
		Antichrist will be all about.		

from God. It is man missing the purpose and the goal for which God created him—God’s own glory.

Seven is the number of God’s covenant. It is the number of man and God together—man’s number, 6; God’s number, 1. It is the number of completeness and unity between God and man. So the church of Christ is represented by this number 7—the seven churches. Christ is in the midst of them. That describes this number as the number of communion and fellowship.

So six is the number of man all by himself, man in his achievements, man and his own glory, man and his promises of peace and prosperity, man and the earth and his earthly kingdom. That is what the kingdom of Antichrist will be all about: man, man’s peace, man’s prosperity, man’s pleasure. That is the spirit of Antichrist that will rise in the end. Counting this number means recognizing the spirit of the antichristian kingdom in whatever age we live. This is called in II Thessalonians 2 the “Mystery of iniquity that does already work,” or, as John says in I John 2:18, “Antichrist shall come; indeed there are many Antichrists

already.” So, this mark is not a specific thing that we are to identify, but it represents the character of Antichrist and his kingdom.

In the passage we see that this mark is received in the forehead and the right hand of many. We are not to take that literally. Instead, we see here that the Antichrist is one who always mimics Jesus Christ and tries to set himself up in the place of Jesus Christ. His name means that he is a puppet, that he comes as a pseudo-Christ, in the place of Jesus Christ, and he is always trying to appear like Christ. We see this in some other passages in the book of Revelation, especially Revelation 14:1. There (the next verse after the verses we consider) we read this: “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.”

So, the hundred forty-four thousand who represent the church and the people of God redeemed, they also have a mark in their foreheads. But this mark is the name of God. They do not have that literally tattooed or engraved into their foreheads. So also here, we are not to take this mark as literal.

Counting this number means recognizing the spirit of the antichristian kingdom in whatever age we live.

gospel has been preached to the ends of the earth, when the last of God’s people have been called to faith by that gospel, then shall the end come.

Another sign of the end is the turmoil among the nations. It is true that at the very end the nations will be deceived under the rule of Antichrist, but there is always war in the hearts of man and rumors of war and, in fact, the Scriptures speak in Revelation 16 of the battle of Armageddon, the struggle between the religious and the political aspects of the kingdom of Antichrist and between the east and the west, and this turmoil will always be there even during the time of the Antichrist and his peace and promise of prosperity. That is because war is in the sinful heart of man. Even though Satan and the Antichrist will promise a kingdom of peace and prosperity, the principle on which that kingdom is founded is a principle of selfishness, of man, of man satisfying himself, and that kingdom will be the highest expression of man-centeredness. So it will be a kingdom that cannot stand, a kingdom that, in the end, will be divided.

Then, think of the catastrophes in the earth—the earthquakes and famines and pestilence in divers places. These are the signs that lead up to that final cataclysmic event

that is the destruction of this universe.

When? During times of lawlessness, abounding iniquity. In the last days men will be eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage as they did in the days of Noah when the Flood came and destroyed them all.

Also, this will be a time of apostasy. People will have departed from the truth. There will be a great falling away. There will be the rise of false Christianity and the worship of man and of the Antichrist. Also a time of pleasure-madness. Men will be lovers of themselves and of pleasure more than lovers of God.

All these signs we have looked at as we have talked about the end times. This is the setting. And then shall the end come. Then shall the sign of the Son of man be. Not only will it be a day when all the elect church of God have been gathered, but it will be a day in which the world has made itself ripe for judgment, and all the purposes that God has for history will have been accomplished and completed. And then God, having no reason anymore to forbear in pouring out His judgment on mankind, will send His Son.

That is the event that we consider here today. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man.

a hundred years, to the time of World War I. Her husband goes off to war, goes across the seas on a boat, and she has no contact with him. He is gone for a long time. She does not know how he will be deployed and she waits and she longs for him to return. She reads the papers every day. She sees around her that the war in which he is fighting is coming to an end. This tells her that he is coming; these are signs of his coming, his return. Then, finally, there is the day of his arrival. He steps off the boat, or he steps off the plane, and there he is. This is the day of his return. This makes her heart leap. So, as we think about this as the church, the bride of Christ, who waits and longs for the coming of Jesus Christ, we are talking about the day of His final arrival.

In the first words of the text (Matt. 24:30), there is a time element. “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man.” “And then.” When, we ask. This takes us back one verse at least, to Matthew 24:29, where Jesus says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” What Jesus is describing here is the created universe falling to pieces. This all seems to take place almost at the same time that He comes

in the clouds of heaven. You cannot imagine this imploding of the universe as something that happens over days or weeks or months. It will be a time of great distress right at the moment when Jesus comes again. This is described for us in Luke 21:25-27 this way: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

But this question of “when” takes us not just to the end of the physical universe, the created universe as we know it, but it takes us back also to the events immediately preceding the end and the coming of Jesus Christ. It takes us back to the other signs of the coming of Jesus Christ that we have been looking at in this series of messages. So, I want to re-cap a little bit and remind you of these signs and of the fact that they are present in the world throughout history, but increase in frequency and intensity immediately before Jesus comes again.

The first sign that we looked at was the sign of the gospel preaching. Then, when the

Instead, there is a figure here. It is the figure of branding something. Branding something is a sign that it belongs to you, a sign of possession. We know that this is what farmers will do with cattle. They will put a brand on them. But we see this also in the Scriptures, a sign of a servant belonging to his master. A servant would receive in his ear a mark that showed that he was a bond-servant committed to his master. He belonged to his master. So here, God’s people are sealed, they belong to Him, they worship Him. The mark of the beast represents those who worship the beast and his image and belong to him. They receive this mark on their forehead and in their hand. This should remind us of Deuteronomy 6 where, after God has given the law to His people, He tells them in verse 8: “Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.” You have the same figure there—the hand and the forehead. This is not literal but it is a symbol of God’s people worshiping Him by obeying His law and keeping His law always before them in their mind (their foreheads) and in their deeds (their hand). In all that they thought and all that they did, they were to worship God and show that they were His.

This is what the mark represents—that some belong

to the cause of Antichrist, that they will be characterized by a man-centered life and a man-centered culture. Just think of secularism today that wants to get rid of God altogether. They will worship the beast, as we read in chapter 14, verse 9. So we do not have here a literal mark or a name of the beast or of the Antichrist, but instead we recognize that the Antichrist and all who follow him have man and the worship of man as their religion.

What does this mark accomplish? We see in the passage several things. First, it will distinguish and divide all men from one another. On the last day there will be a separation of the sheep and the goats. But that divide, that antithesis, exists already in the world and exists all throughout history. The point here, though, is that at the very end this antithesis will become very clear. In the last day it will be very plain who has the Lord’s name on them and who is on the Lord’s side and who has the name of the devil and the beast—the mark of the beast. This is not something that God’s people will accidentally receive—this mark—and then have committed some unforgiveable sin. Rather, the idea is that it will be very clear who is of the Lord and who belongs to the Antichrist and his kingdom. Notice in the passage they *receive* this mark. That is a

sign of actively taking it. They received it in their head and their hand; their minds, their worldview, their thoughts, and their purposes were owned by and given

over to the beast, to man and the glory of man. The hand represents the strength of man. In all of one's activity, then, one serves man and the Antichrist and not God. Why did God make man? God made man to love Him with all his heart and mind and soul and strength. Those who follow the Antichrist will do the exact opposite. They will worship the beast and his image.

But this will not be a pagan-like religion. No, it will be a civilized, modern, philosophical secularism that will permeate the world. But it will be very clear. That clarity will be good because we will know in that day who is truly a child of God and who is not. In the day of the Antichrist, when the second beast causes all to have this mark put in their foreheads and on their hands, all hypocrisy will be exposed. That is the idea. We will be purified in our devotion and worship to God. The fires of persecution will themselves serve the good of God's people.

This mark, though not literal, will result in the barring of all true Christians from participating in society. In verse

17: "That no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." The point

is this that if you do not support the kingdom of man, if you do not worship the Antichrist, you also will not receive the benefits of that kingdom. There will be no buying or selling. Of course, in light of all the technological developments of our day we can easily understand how such restrictions will be placed on Christians.

The purpose of the Antichrist in distinguishing people from one another in that final day will be so that he can persecute the people of God. Notice that in verse 15. The second beast "had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." These are the same ones who would not receive the mark of the beast. That persecution will be a persecution such as there never was before in the history of this world. The results of that persecution will be not only that Christians will be ostracized from the social and the economic aspect of society but the witness of the church will be silenced by the unbelieving world.

As we think about this, what

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

May 22, 2016
No. 3829

Jesus' Coming in Glory
Rev. Rodney Kleyen

Dear Radio Friends,

Jesus is coming again. This is the Christian hope. We say this not only because Jesus has promised it, and not only as something we expect sometime off in the future, but because we see the coming of Jesus Christ all around us. This is one of the points that we have emphasized in this series of messages on the last times, especially as we have looked at the signs of His coming. The signs of the coming of Jesus Christ are not far-off events in the future, immediately before He comes again; but the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ are events that are taking place all around us in the nations, in the creation, and in the church.

Today we are going to consider the coming of Jesus Christ—the last sign. Earlier in Matthew 24 the disciples asked, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the world?" Jesus gives to them many other signs of His coming, but now He really comes to the answer to their question: What is the sign of Thy coming and the sign of the end of the world? That sign is the sign of the Son of man coming on the clouds of

heaven. We are going to consider Matthew 24:30: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

As we have gone through this series and looked at the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ, we have been waiting for this. As we live our lives in this world, we long for this. This is our hope. The interest of the child of God in the coming of Jesus Christ is personal. Jesus does not come just to deliver His church or to raise the dead in a general sense, but the ascended Jesus Christ, when He comes again, will come to me, a believer who is a part of His church. He will come to raise my dead body. On that day, I will see Him. He is my Lord and my Savior.

We can think of it in terms of this illustration. There is a woman who is a wife and a mother, and her husband is deployed, sent off to war. Perhaps, think of this not of the days in which we live, of modern technology and communication, but think back

believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” Our privilege will be to fill up the remainder of the cup of the suffering of Jesus Christ. Not a suffering for sin, but a suffering at the hands of the wicked world against Jesus Christ and His witness and His bride, the church. In that day, when we suffer for the name of Jesus Christ, we will say, “I’m not worthy of the suffering. This is the grace of God that has equipped me and prepared me for this.” “Blessed are ye,” said Jesus, “when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.”

So, this should be our perspective on the suffering of God’s people in this world. What a day of grace that will be! The saints who will stand in that day will stand so close to Jesus Christ and His cause, and they will have an experience of the grace of God such as never was, nor ever shall be. Not only will the tribulation be the greatest that ever was, but the grace and the perseverance of God’s people will be greater than ever before. What a day of victory that will be!

So, do not be afraid as you

think about the day of persecution. Go back to the first question that I asked: When you think about the great tribulation, do you say, “I hope I’m living on that day”? or “I hope that my children get to experience that”? What we should say is this: “Oh, that that may be my privilege as a child of God!” Not that we want persecution, not that we want to give our lives up, but what a privilege it will be to stand with Christ and to stand for Christ in the heart of the kingdom of the Antichrist and to experience in that the presence of Christ and the fullness of His grace.

So we think about this sign and we say: “Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly.”

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for

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the grace that Thou dost give to Thy people to endure every trial and every persecution and the animosity and the hatred of the world—not just to them, not just to us, but to Thy Word and to Thy gospel. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt help us to see it as a privilege and in it to experience the greatness of Thy presence and grace that will preserve us till the day of Jesus Christ. Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. Amen.

is the calling of God’s people? The calling is here, with wisdom (v. 18), to have understanding and count the number of the beast. That does not mean that we literally figure it out. But, are you listening to what God’s Word says and what the world is saying? Are you watching in your life for a man-centeredness? Are you watching out for the good of God’s church and the good of God’s people in this world so you will not be caught up in the false religion of pleasure and of materialism? This is the calling: Here is wisdom—to count the number of the beast. So we do not have to wait till the last day to be able to identify this mark. But we watch for this sign and this man-centeredness already in our lives today.

That begins by looking at your own life. Are you directed by the Word of God? Do you give priority in your life to spiritual things over against the things of this world, so that your life is not one of pleasure and not one of material gain? Why are we here in this world? What are we living for? Is it not this, that with our mind and with our hand we think on and we love and we serve God with our whole being? In this way we are prepared and watching for the spirit of Antichrist.

Then there is also comfort for us, and we close with this thought. There is comfort for us

in thinking about this number of the beast. This number is the number six. It is man without God. It is a representation of the power of the devil and the beast and the Antichrist, which power is only a human power. So, in that day when the kingdom of Antichrist rises under the banner of man, we do not have to be fearful. In the next chapter, Revelation 14:9-12, we see that all that falls under this number and all that receive this number are overcome and are cast into the lake of fire. God has given us another number, a special number and that is the number seven—the number of His covenant. Later in the book of Revelation we will come to that and we will see that the tabernacle of God is with men. This is what we look for—the fulfillment of the unity of God and man in the new heavens and the new earth, when God will dwell with His people forever in perfect covenant unity.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the revelation in Thy Word of the character of the kingdom of Antichrist so that we may be watchful and so that we, under the banner of the covenant, may seek our life in Thee and in the things above, not in the things of this earthly life. Keep us, we pray, watching and ready for the return of Jesus Christ. We ask if for His sake, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

May 15, 2016
No. 3828

The Great Tribulation
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

Today we are going to look at the sign of the great tribulation of the last days. In our previous message we looked at the sign of the mark of the beast from Revelation 13 and we saw that the main point is this, that in the last days it will be very clear who are God's people and who are the followers of the Antichrist. That will make it very easy for the Antichrist to identify for persecution those who are God's people. Revelation 13:15 says that he will cause that as many as do not worship the beast or receive his mark will be killed.

I want to begin today's message by reading a couple of different passages from God's Word where Jesus speaks of this final tribulation. First I want to read from Luke 21:12-19. There Jesus says:

But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall

answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.

Then I want to read from the gospel of Matthew (24:21, 22), where Jesus says, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

As I read those passages of Scripture, did you, as a believer, say, "I hope that I am alive in those days"? Or, "I hope that my children get to see and experience the great tribulation of the last days." More likely you said, "Those will be dreadful and dark days of persecution when family members betray

to God's people. Revelation 13:10 speaks of the patience of the saints, and in Luke 21:19 we have the same idea. Right when it would be our inclination to stop, to sit, to remain silent—then God will give us the strength of His Holy Spirit and God will fill our souls with the power to persevere even under persecution, in the face of the dragon's wrath, to confess His name. So Jesus says in Luke 21 that this will turn to your advantage and to your testimony, that is, it will give you an opportunity to speak of the great victory of the gospel right when it looks as though Satan and the world has his victory; to speak the life and the salvation and the victory that is ours in Jesus Christ in the midst of the death and the animosity and the persecution of the Antichrist. So strong will that be that the persecutors, the Antichrist and his people, will not be able to answer the faith of God's people.

Here is the strength that God's people will have in that day. God will keep them. He has chosen them. He will shorten those days and He will give them a special measure of His grace. Because He will, Jesus tells us to pray and to watch with the Word of God open, alert, waiting and watching. God will grant our requests. He will help us. He will surround us with His presence, and our experience will be that we know His strength and

His power and His presence as never before. What a day of victory that will be!

Jesus gives us wonderfully comforting promises. In Luke 21: "Not a hair of your head shall perish." He does not mean here simply that all the hairs of your head are numbered and that God knows them, but this, not even a hair of your head will go to hell. The devil may take our lives in that day; our families may be taken from us; our possessions may be destroyed. But he cannot remove us from our salvation. He cannot remove so much as a hair of our head from our salvation.

There is promise, in that, of the future bodily resurrection of God's people. "Not a hair of your head shall perish." Every part of you will be raised to live with Christ and to reign with Him eternally in the new heaven and the new earth.

So we should think of persecution as a privilege. What a privilege it will be. In the book of Acts, chapter 5, the disciples rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ. They saw it to be a privilege to be a part of the era of the fastest growth of the church. But they also saw it a privilege during that time to suffer for Jesus Christ on account of their faith. Philippians 1:29 describes persecution as a gracious gift: "To you it is given not only to

Jesus will come during the time of Antichrist and destroy him with the power of His coming. There will be a personal showdown, a face-to-face meeting of Jesus Christ and the Antichrist. That will be the end of the kingdom of the Antichrist and the end of persecution.

That is because it is not God's will that the elect should perish. In Matthew 24:22, Jesus says this: "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." When Jesus says that "there should no flesh be saved," He does not mean that if He didn't come again there would be no people living on the earth anymore or that the elect would lose their salvation. Rather, He is expressing here, in the negative, that it is His will that there should always remain some of His people on the earth and that none of them will ever lose their salvation. Perhaps in the last days the church will be very small and reduced to almost nothing. But always there will be a witness on the part of God's people, right in the heart of the kingdom of Antichrist, to confess the name of Jesus Christ against the Antichrist. Now we can think of Daniel and his three friends as they appeared before the typical Antichrist, Nebuchadnezzar, and gave witness in his kingdom of God and His truth.

Third, believers will endure in the last days because of a special work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will speak through God's people. In Luke 21, Jesus gives us instruction on how to handle the court cases and the trials of the last days. You have been drawn before judges and kings. You are in a courtroom, and here is the news camera and the judge who has condemned others to death for their faith. There is the prosecuting attorney. The temptation for us in those days will be to mull ahead of time over and over what we will say, to try to come up with the best answer in our court case. Jesus said, "Don't worry about that, don't prepare for that day because, in that day, you will be given a special grace and a special measure of the Holy Spirit to speak before kings and rulers who hate God. God," He says, "will give us wisdom and a mouth to speak." The Holy Spirit will work through us in such circumstances. What a speech that will be. Just think of Stephen, the first martyr, and the boldness he was given to speak before his persecutors. Even the grace that he was given by God to pray for his persecutors that God not lay this sin to their charge; and the glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ at God's right hand that gave him that special grace. In that day the Holy Spirit will give the grace of patience, of perseverance,

us," and so you cry out: "Spare us those days, Lord." But, if that is our response, we have missed something in what we read—the beautiful promises and prophecies of how God's saints will endure those days.

The days of persecution will be days of victory, not for Satan but for God's people. Persecution and tribulation are going to be the setting for the most remarkable victory of the gospel and the church and for the richest experience of God's grace and the presence of God in all of history. Not one of God's people will perish. Not even a hair from their head shall perish.

When we speak of the great tribulation, we are speaking of the future and final persecution of the church, when all the combined forces of humanity under Antichrist, all the nations under the devil, will come against God's people. This is described in the imagery of Revelation 20:7-9 as the loosing of Satan, his deceiving of the nations, and his compassing about the city of God.

When we look at Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24, we see that this is a future reality for the

church. Jesus places this specifically after all the other signs during the time of Antichrist and immediately before His second coming. Following the text in Matthew 24, we read in verses 29, 30: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened...and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." So this will be the last sign before the

sign of Jesus on the clouds of heaven.

Yes, it is true that all through history there is animosity against Christianity

and persecution from the unbelieving world, and we see in that that the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ are always present in history, but they increase in intensity and frequency the closer to the time when Jesus comes. This will come to expression in what Jesus calls the Great Tribulation of the last days.

In the Bible, there are two words used for persecution. One of them means to pursue somebody or to chase someone; the other means to press or to squeeze down. That is the word that Jesus uses here in Matthew 24:21 when He says there "shall be great tribulation." The goal

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of the persecution of the church by the world is to rid the earth of the existence and the witness of Christianity, to squeeze it out of existence, much as you would squeeze an orange to get juice from it.

In these passages, Jesus tells us some of the specifics of the great tribulation, not to frighten us but to prepare us so that we are not surprised or terrified when this persecution comes. He says, “Ye shall be hated of all nations for my sake.” This means that persecution has its source in the hatred that is in the heart of the unbeliever and of the reprobate not only for the people of God, but for Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus says, “If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you.” This will be a universal, worldwide persecution. “You will be hated of all nations,” Matthew 24:9. Luke and Mark both translate that as “all men.” “All nations” indicates that under Antichrist there will be an organized, stated policy of the nations of the earth to persecute Christians. “All men” indicates that there will not be tolerance on any level for Christians and for Christianity. People and local governments will no longer turn a blind eye to the Christian presence. This will be an organized and a legalized persecution. According to Jesus, believers will be brought before rulers and councils. It will not be police beating on

your door, but family members will turn you in. Likely, the Antichrist and his kingdom will offer rewards to those who turn in Christians. This great tribulation will involve imprisonment and torture and death. Families will be torn apart. God’s people will be thrown into prison with thieves and murderers and the worst of society. There will be physical tortures that exceed what we have ever seen done to man in the history of this world. This will be a time when it is impossible for God’s people to live a normal life in society. Not only will their buying and selling be restricted, but they will be forced to flee to the mountains and the caves.

This will be a persecution that is specifically directed against faithful believers and the true church of God. It will not be a general persecution of Christians and Christianity or anyone who goes under that name but only of the true church and the true people of God. Under the Antichrist, there will be much religion. There will be churches; there will be worship. But the true church will refuse to worship the beast. They will not allow man on the throne of God. They will not allow Satan and the Antichrist the honor that is due to God alone. For this they will be persecuted. So the Scriptures indicate that this great tribulation will come only on the elect of God.

One of the important questions for us to answer is: How will God’s people endure such dark days of persecution? In the passages that we read, what should stand out is that God will preserve them; God will keep them. They will persevere because of the preserving work of God.

You see this in several ways. First of all, they will persevere because of their election. Jesus says in Matthew 24 that “for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” Mark adds, “for the elect’s sake, whom he has chosen”—because of their election by the sovereign God, they will persevere. Election is the eternal choice of God the Father of a specific group of individuals for salvation. He gives them to Jesus Christ; He entrusts them to Jesus Christ’s care. Jesus comes and He lays down His life for them to secure this, that not one of them will perish. Because of our election, we believers will persevere under persecution. Not because we have chosen God, but because we know that He has chosen us.

How do you know that? The question is not: How do you know the secret counsel of God in election? But this: Do you know the grace of God in your life today? Do you have the grace of God that gives you faith to believe the gospel, the grace that brings you into repentance

and confession of your sins, the grace on account of which you desire to live a more holy life and to live a life of love and obedience to God? That is the grace of election. And the grace that produces that today in your life is the grace that will preserve you in the last days. That is why Jesus says, “It is impossible that the elect should perish.” Because the Father has chosen us, He will keep us.

Second, we will persevere in those days because, as Jesus says, “Those days will be shortened.” That does not mean that the days will have less daylight hours. Nor does it mean that when persecution comes we will be able to predict the day and the hour of Jesus’ coming. Rather, this is the Scripture’s way of saying that the kingdom of Antichrist will be cut short. In the height of his reign, when he is at his full strength, when he is organized against Christianity—then his kingdom will be interrupted. So we read in the prophecies of Daniel and in Revelation of forty-two months, or three and a half years, which is not a complete but only a half of a period of time. The end of the kingdom of Antichrist will come not because of a gradual disintegration over time and through internal turmoil. It is not that his power will be eroded but because Christ will suddenly come and end that kingdom. In II Thessalonians 2 we read that