



Matthew Lesson 33

July 6, 2021

“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

24:23-42

Tonight we are continuing in chapter 24 and Yeshua is continuing His teaching of His disciples on the Mount of Olives. The day is still Monday, Nisan 12, but now, probably late in the afternoon. 23 *“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here’s the Messiah,’ or ‘There He is,’ do not believe it. 24 For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and show great signs and wonders so as to lead astray, if possible, even the chosen”* (Matthew 24:23-24 TLV). Reading this, a great number of Yeshua’s followers would most likely immediately think that Yeshua was referring to the anti-Messiah, the anti-Christ. Even though this individual has not appeared, that is what many think of when reading this. I’ve said this many times before, but must say it again: “in my opinion, there is no physical anti-Christ.” There have been many false messiahs through the centuries and some will continue until Yeshua returns.

The theology which promotes a coming world ruler known as the Anti-Christ is based upon very slim Scriptural evidence. Their major evidence is two Scriptures, one in Daniel and one in 2Thessalonians. 7 *“Then he will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of abominations will come one who destroys, until the decreed annihilation is poured out on the one who destroys”* (Daniel 9:27 TLV). Dispensationalists say that the “he” in this verse is the coming world ruler, the Anti-Christ, who will rule for a week of years, seven years. During his first years, he will allow daily sacrifices to continue in the newly rebuilt Temple. But, in the middle of the week, the 3 ½ year point, he will stop the sacrifices and begin to persecute the Jews. Then, he will ultimately be destroyed by the breath of Yeshua’s mouth. But, in order for all this to happen, this one verse, verse 27, must be deferred and fulfilled almost two thousand years after the verses which preceded it were fulfilled. What *Sha’ul* said is their second major proof: 3 *“Let no one deceive you in any way, for the Day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the one destined to be destroyed. 4 He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in the Temple of God, proclaiming himself that he is God”* (2Thessalonians 2:3-4 TLV). This passage and the following verses is used to bolster their argument. To them, “the man of lawlessness” is the Anti-Christ.

But, the truth is that the majority of what they say is evidence are actually conjectural writings from three men. The first was a Catholic monk, Adso of Montier-En-Der, who wrote a letter about the anti-Christ to Queen Gerbera of France over a thousand years ago in about 950 CE. The second was a commentary on The Book of Revelation by a Jesuit priest named Francisco Ribera in about 1585. The third man, a Jesuit priest named Manuel Lacunza wrote “The Coming of Messiah in Majesty and Glory” in 1782. All three writings were about the anti-Christ and his appearance right before G-d’s judgment at the end of time. It appears that the later writers built on the earlier ones with much common material appearing in each writing. It is interesting how fully this theory was developed even as early as the 10th century. I have included what purports to be an English translation of Adso’s letter as Addendum A

to the written notes of this lesson. Here are a few sentences from his last paragraph. “Since we have spoken about his beginning, let us say what end he will have. This Antichrist, the devil's son and the worst master of evil, as has been said, will plague the whole world with great persecution and torture the whole people of God with various torments for three and a half years. After he has killed Elijah and Enoch and crowned with martyrdom the others who persevere in the faith, at last God's judgment will come upon him, as Saint Paul writes when he says, "The Lord Jesus will kill him with the breath of his mouth" (2 Thess. 2:8).”

Yeshua said: 24 *“For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and show great signs and wonders so as to lead astray, if possible, even the chosen”* (Matthew 24:23-24 TLV). There have been many who claimed they were the Jewish Messiah. After Yeshua's resurrection and even before the Temple was destroyed, a Jewish man named Theudas led a rebellion and claimed to be the Messiah. We mentioned last week the most famous false Messiah, *Bar Kochba*, the leader of the 2nd Jewish rebellion against Rome about one hundred years after Yeshua. As false messiah candidates, a number of United States presidents have been mentioned as well as Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden. Mao Tzedong and even Prince Charles of Great Britain have been proposed. Some of them actually were false messiahs. Their signs and wonders were not necessarily supernatural signs, but such things as military power and charismatic sway over masses of people. I would also have to mention Mohammed and the religion which he formed. He and his later followers undoubtedly led many Christians astray by force and on penalty of death.

25 *“See, I have told you beforehand. 26 So if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. Or, ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. 27 For just as lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man”* (Matthew 24:25-27 TLV). Yeshua will not come secretly. Don't believe anyone who says that Yeshua's already here. Yeshua was telling them that His coming would be seen in the heavens just as lightning can be seen by people many miles apart. Just as those of us in Thomasville can see a large lightning strike, so also can the people in Boston fifteen miles away. But when Yeshua comes back, the whole world will see Him. His coming will be in the sky just like the lightning, but miraculously appearing all around the earth at the same time. Yeshua purposefully referred to Himself in this verse as “the Son of Man.” This was His use of *remez*, hinting back at another Scripture. He was calling their attention to Daniel 7:13. In a vision, Daniel saw Yeshua: 13 *“I was watching in the night visions. Behold, One like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days, and was brought into His presence”* (Daniel 7:13 TLV). Yeshua will return on the clouds of heaven, just as He ascended to heaven from the earth in the clouds. His disciples saw Him ascend: 9 *After saying all this—while they were watching—He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 While they were staring into heaven as He went up, suddenly two men stood with them in white clothing. 11 They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you keep standing here staring into heaven? This Yeshua, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:9-11 TLV).

Yeshua emphasized that “every eye would see Him.” Through John, a prisoner on the Island of Patmos, He said: 7 *“Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him. Yes, amen”* (Revelation 1:7 TLV)! What Yeshua said next in Matthew 24 is cryptic: 28 *“For wherever the carcass is, there the vultures will gather”* (Matthew 24:28 TLV). Again, we have imagery about the sky. Just as vultures floating around in the sky can detect a dead body

from miles away, so will everyone detect Yeshua when He returns in the clouds. This is not about vultures or a dead body, but about everyone seeing Yeshua when He returns.

29 *“But immediately after the trouble of those days, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken”* (Matthew 24:29 TLV). The days to which He was referring are future days, future from now and immediately preceding His return. In my opinion, the trouble of those days Yeshua spoke of is the trouble of our days. Everything is in place for this to happen. It could not have happened at any time in the past because Israel had not been regathered as a nation and the city of Jerusalem was under foreign occupation. We’re experiencing those troubles now and the coming signs in the heavens are somewhere in our near future. In Luke, Yeshua adds this: 26 *“People will lose heart from fear and anticipation of what is overtaking the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken”* (Luke 21:26 TLV). Yeshua said that we are to be forewarned about this. After the trouble, there will be awesome signs in the heavens. And, these things will happen just before He returns. But, we are not to fear and not to lose heart. The ones who will be in fear are the ones who have not trusted Him and who do not understand His words.

30 *“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’ with power and great glory”* (Matthew 24:30 TLV). In my opinion, the sign of the Son of Man is His appearance in the heavens itself just as was prophesied in Daniel 7. He is the sign. Possibly we will even see His crucifixion wounds. The Jews, not the people of the world, are the Tribes of the Land and they will mourn. It may be at that time that the Prophet Zechariah’s prophecy will be fulfilled: 10 *“Then I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication, when they will look toward Me whom they pierced. They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son and grieve bitterly for him, as one grieves for a firstborn”* (Zechariah 12:10 TLV). The unsaved Jews will be the mourners when they see Him in the sky and see His wounds.

We have two witnesses of Yeshua appearing in the heavens from *Sha’ul*: 16 *“For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the blast of God’s shofar, and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left behind, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air—and so we shall always be with the Lord”* (1Thessalonians 4:16-17 TLV). 51 *“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last shofar. For the shofar will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed”* (1Corinthians 15:51-52 TLV). Every eye will see Him including those who don’t know Him. When will all Israel be saved? We don’t know, but my opinion is that it will happen even before they see the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens and mourn for Him. They can still grieve about their past behavior toward Him even after they have trusted in Him.

31 *“He will send out His angels with a great shofar, and they will gather together His chosen from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Matthew 24:31 TLV). Some see this as ADONAI’s physical gathering of Israel back to the land which began in the last several centuries and is continuing to take place now. I personally believe that this verse is a reference to *Sha’ul*’s words in 1Thessalonians and 1Corinthians which we just read. It is the resurrection of the righteous dead and the rising of the living to meet Yeshua in the air. All who have trusted Yeshua are “His chosen” and this group will include “all Israel” whom I

believe will have trusted Him before He comes in the air. However, it is possible that their trust could come as late as Yeshua's appearance in the air and then rise to meet Him. Whichever the case, all Israel will be saved.

Then, Yeshua spoke about the fig tree. 32 *"Now learn the parable from the fig tree. When its branch becomes tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 So also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the door"* (Matthew 24:32-33 TLV). A little more was added in Luke's Gospel: 29 *Then Yeshua told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 As soon as they sprout their leaves, you see it and you know at once that summer is near. 31 So also, when you see these all these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near"* (Luke 21:29-31 TLV). In Matthew and Mark, it's called "the parable of the fig tree." In Luke, it's just called "a parable" because Yeshua also referred to "all trees in addition to the fig tree." Just as we know that summer is near when fig trees and as Yeshua said in Luke, "all trees" sprout their leaves, we know that when we see the things which Yeshua spoke of happening, we know that the Kingdom of G-d is near; that Yeshua's appearance is near.

Is Israel the fig tree? 34 *"Amen, I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things happen"* (Matthew 24:34 TLV). Mark and Luke say essentially the same. The words, "this generation," seem to be important in determining whether or not Israel is the fig tree. We know that Isaiah speaks of Israel symbolically as a fig tree and also Micah. But, they and other prophets also speak of Israel as "the vine" and "the olive tree." The Blue Letter Bible says that: "The vine" is a symbol of Israel's spiritual privileges, "the fig tree" is a symbol of Israel's national privileges and "the olive tree" is a symbol of Israel's religious privileges. If they are correct, then it is possible that we should be looking at Israel, "the nation" with regard to Yeshua's words. Israel may indeed be the "fig tree." But, take this with a grain of salt as it is speculation and not fact. Yeshua does not identify the fig tree. Regarding Yeshua's words: *"when you see these all these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near,"* we can understand that He was referring to the wars and rumors of wars and even the signs in the heavens. We must also be aware that another of these "things happening" is the end of Jerusalem being trampled by the Gentiles. And, that has already happened. If Israel is the fig tree in the parable, then it would seem that the generation to which Yeshua was referring is the generation which would be living in the time since Israel became a nation again. That generation would be the generation of those born in 1948 and later after Israel became a nation. A person born in 1948 would be 73 today. Just based upon the facts that Israel miraculously became a nation in 1948 plus the ending of Gentile rule in Jerusalem in 1967, we have to know that the Kingdom of G-d is near. If that generation will not pass away before all these things happen, Yeshua's coming on the clouds will occur before this generation passes away. How long could this generation last? It could be at least another 30 years or more if one born in 1948 lives to 100. But Yeshua didn't say that all of that generation would have to pass away, just that the whole generation would not pass away before all these things happened. If the current generation in the Nation of Israel is that generation, Yeshua could return sometime within the next 30 years or sooner. It is also possible that the generation could be the ones born in 1967 and after when Jerusalem was recaptured. If that is true, then we can add another 20 years or so to the generation and Yeshua's return could be up to 50 years in the future. I believe and hope and pray that it will be sooner, much sooner!

Because of the signs of the times today, what Yeshua said next is extremely important to us right now. 35 *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away"*

(Matthew 24:35 TLV). Yeshua's statement about heaven and earth passing away does not mean that it will pass away after the time of trouble. I believe that He was referring to what is spoken of in Revelation. But, we don't fully understand the symbolism of Revelation concerning the new heaven and the new earth. There will be changes, but we don't know how or what. It may even be a renewed earth. But, Yeshua's intention in saying this, I believe, was to emphasize that His words will never pass away. It was also a restatement and confirmation of what He said in Matthew 5:17-18. I won't take the time to read it now. You know what it says.

36 *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son, except the Father alone"* (Matthew 24:36 TLV). The day and the hour Yeshua was speaking about is His coming on the clouds of heaven to receive His faithful to Himself. He said that He did not know the day or the hour that it would happen, but I would suspect that since He is now at the right hand of the Father that He does know.

37 *"For just as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. 39 And they did not understand until the flood came and swept them all away. So shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man"* (Matthew 24:37-39 TLV). Yeshua's point here is easy to understand. The people of Noah's day were scoffing at him and going on with their lives. It is that way today. Many say: "yes, I am going to follow Jesus, but not right now." Others just choose their own gods to follow, having ignored ADONAI's spirit speaking to their hearts. And others say: "There is no G-d. I only trust in what I can see." The coming of the "Son of Man" in these verses is His appearance in the heavens. When Yeshua appears in the air, these people will find that it may be too late. The writer of Hebrews said: 27 *"And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this judgment, 28 so also Messiah, was offered once to bear the sins of many. He will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those eagerly awaiting Him for salvation"* (Hebrews 9:27-28 TLV). In other words, when Yeshua comes again, He will not be a sin sacrifice. He will appear in the air to us who are eagerly awaiting Him, those who have already trusted in Him. If you have not trusted in His sacrificial death before He returns, it's too late. The others seeing Him appear in the heavens may be like the people of Noah's day beating on the door of the ark trying to get in. The salvation for which we are eagerly awaiting that Yeshua referred to is salvation from the troubles of this world and not from our sins. At that time, we will have rested from our labors and will get our new, resurrection bodies. I don't know for sure that you can't get saved after Yeshua appears in the air. He is merciful and may recognize those who are truly repentant. We hope so.

40 *"Then two men will be in the field, one taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill, one taken and one left. 42 Therefore stay alert; for you do not know what day your Lord is coming"* (Matthew 24:40-42 TLV). This is a continuation of Yeshua's appearance in the air. One man in the field is a believer and rises to meet Yeshua. The other does not know him and is left behind. One of the women at the mill is a believer and rises to meet Yeshua. The other doesn't know Him and is "left behind." This is not the Rapture. The Rapture is a term from Dispensational theology. It does refer to our rising to meet Yeshua, what *Sha'ul* spoke about in 1Thessalonians and 1Corinthians. But, the Rapture is not just an event, it's a whole doctrine. It is also a word not found in Scripture. To believe in the Rapture is to believe in the doctrine of the Anti-Christ and that the Great Tribulation is coming in the future and for the whole earth. The Greek word *harpazo*, meaning a catching

or snatching away, is what underlies *Sha'ul's* words "caught up" in the 1Thessalonians 4. We definitely believe we will be caught up, but not in the doctrine of the Rapture.

Who is going up to meet Yeshua is already settled for those who have died knowing Messiah. But it is not settled for the living. You and I know in whom we have trusted. But, as each day passes, these words of Yeshua become more and more urgent for those who don't know Him. We are living in the season of His return. It could be any one of the next 30 years or so. We are not expecting an Anti-Christ to come and rule the world to know that Yeshua's return is near. We know the time is near now and we who are Yeshua's followers must stay alert. We must stop playing and get serious about being His disciples.

At this point, we will close our study for the night. In Jerusalem, the day is still Nisan 12 in the year 30 and now it is probably very late in the afternoon. There are two days remaining before Yeshua is lifted up on the stake for our sins. *Shalom aleichem!*

Addendum A:

Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist

By Adso of Montier-En-Der

Written to Queen Gerber in approximately 950 CE

When you wish to be informed about the Antichrist the first thing you want to know is why he is so called. This is because he will be contrary to Christ in all things and will do things that are against Christ. Christ came as a humble man; he will come as a proud one. Christ came to raise the lowly, to justify sinners; he, on the other hand, will cast out the lowly, magnify sinners, exalt the wicked. He will always exalt vices opposed to virtues, will drive out the evangelical law, will revive the worship of demons in the world, will seek his own glory (John 7:18), and will call himself Almighty God. The Antichrist has many ministers of his malice. Many of them have already existed, like Antiochus, Nero, and Domitian. Even now in our own time we know there are many Antichrists, for anyone, layman, cleric, or monk, who lives contrary to justice and attacks the rule of his way of life and blasphemes what is good (Rom. 14:16) is an Antichrist, the minister of Satan.

Now let us see about the Antichrist's origin. What I say is not thought out or made up on my own, but in my attentive reading I find it all written down in books. As our authors say, the Antichrist will be born from the Jewish people, that is, from the tribe of Dan, as the Prophet says: "Let Dan be a snake in the wayside, an adder on the path." He will sit in the wayside like a serpent and will be on the path in order to wound those who walk in the paths of justice (Ps. 22:3) and kill them with the poison of his wickedness. He will be born from the union of a mother and father, like other men, not, as some say, from a virgin alone. Still, he will be conceived wholly in sin (Ps. 50:7), will be generated in sin, and will be born in sin (John 9:34). At the very beginning of his conception the devil will enter his mother's womb at the same moment. The devil's power will foster and protect him in his mother's womb and it will always be with him. Just as the Holy Spirit came into the mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ and overshadowed her with his power and filled her with divinity so that she conceived of the Holy Spirit and what was born of her was divine and holy (Luke 1:35), so too the devil will descend into the Antichrist's mother, will completely fill her, completely encompass her,

completely master her, completely possess her within and without, so that with the devil's cooperation she will conceive through a man and what will be born from her will be totally wicked, totally evil, totally lost. For this reason that man is called the "Son of Perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3), because he will destroy the human race as far as he can and will himself be destroyed at the last day.

You have heard how he is to be born; now hear the place where he will be born. Just as Our Lord and Redeemer foresaw Bethlehem for himself as the place to assume humanity and to be born for us, so too the devil knew a place fit for that lost man who is called Antichrist, a place from which the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10) ought to come, namely, the city of Babylon. Antichrist will be born in that city, which once was a celebrated and glorious pagan center and the capital of the Persian Empire. It says that he will be brought up and protected in the cities of Bethsaida and Corozain, the cities that the Lord reproaches in the Gospel when he says, "Woe to you, Bethsaida, woe to you Corozain!" (Matt. 11:21). The Antichrist will have magicians, enchanters, diviners, and wizards who at the devil's bidding will rear him and instruct him in every evil, error, and wicked art. Evil spirits will be his leaders, his constant associates, and inseparable companions. Then he will come to Jerusalem and with various tortures will slay all the Christians he cannot convert to his cause. He will erect his throne in the Holy Temple, for the Temple that Solomon built to God that had been destroyed he will raise up to its former state. He will circumcise himself and will pretend that he is the son of Almighty God.

He will first convert kings and princes to his cause, and then through them the rest of the peoples. He will attack the places where the Lord Christ walked and will destroy what the Lord made famous. Then he will send messengers and his preachers through the whole world. His preaching and power will extend "from sea to sea, from East to West" (Ps. 71:8), from North to South. He will also work many signs, great and unheard-of prodigies (Apoc. 13:13). He will make fire come down from heaven in a terrifying way, trees suddenly blossom and wither, the sea become stormy and unexpectedly calm. He will make the elements change into differing forms, divert the order and flow of bodies of water, disturb the air with winds and all sorts of commotions, and perform countless other wondrous acts. He will raise the dead "in the sight of men in order to lead into error, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24). For when they shall have seen great signs of such a nature even those who are perfect and God's chosen ones will doubt whether or not he is the Christ who according to the scriptures will come at the end of the world.

He will arouse universal persecution against the Christians and all the elect. He will lift himself up against the faithful in three ways, that is, by terror, by gifts, and by prodigies. To those who believe in him he will give much gold and silver. Those he is not able to corrupt with gifts, he will overcome with terror; those he cannot overcome with terror, he will try to seduce with signs and prodigies. Those he cannot seduce with prodigies, he will cruelly torture and miserably put to death in the sight of all. "Then there will be tribulation such as has not been on earth from when the nations began to exist up to that time. Then those who are in the field I will flee to the mountains, and he who is on the roof will not go down into his house to take anything from it" (Matt. 24:21,16; Dan. 12:1). Then every faithful Christian who will be discovered will either deny God, or, if he will remain faithful, will perish, whether through sword, or fiery furnace, or serpents, or beasts, or through some other kind of torture. This terrible and fearful tribulation will last for three and a half years in the whole world. "Then the days will be shortened for the sake of the elect, for unless the Lord had shortened those days, mankind would not have been saved" (Matt. 24:22).

The Apostle Paul reveals the time when the Antichrist will come and when Judgment Day will begin in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter two ("We beseech you through the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ"), in the place where he says: "Unless the defection shall have come first and the man of sin and the Son of Perdition shall have been revealed" (2 Thess. 2:3). For we know that after the Greek Empire, or even after the Persian Empire, each of which in its time had great glory and flourished with the highest power, at last after all the other empires there came into existence the Roman Empire, which was the strongest of all and had all the kingdoms of the earth under its control. All nations were subject to the Romans and paid tribute to them. This is why the Apostle Paul says that the Antichrist will not come into the world "unless the defection shall have come first," that is, unless first all the kingdoms that were formerly subject shall have defected from the Roman Empire. This time has not yet come, because even though we may see the Roman Empire for the most part in ruins, nonetheless, as long as the Kings of the Franks who now possess the Roman Empire by right shall last, the dignity of the Roman Empire will not completely perish because it will endure in its kings. Some of our learned men say that one of the Kings of the Franks will possess anew the Roman Empire. He will be in the last time and will be the greatest and the last of all kings. After he has successfully governed his empire, he will finally come to Jerusalem and will lay aside his scepter and crown on the Mount of Olives. This will be the end and the consummation of the Roman and Christian Empire.

Immediately, according to the saying of Paul the Apostle cited above, they say that the Antichrist will be at hand. And then will be revealed the man of sin, namely, the Antichrist. Even though he is a man, he will still be the source of all sins and the Son of Perdition, that is, the son of the devil, not through nature but through imitation because he will fulfill the devil's will in everything. The fullness of diabolical power and of the whole character of evil will dwell in him in bodily fashion; for in him will be hidden all the treasures of malice and iniquity.

"He is the Enemy," that is, he is contrary to Christ and all his members "and he is lifted up, that is, raised up in pride above everything that is called God" (2 Thess. 2:4), that is, above all the heathen gods, Hercules, Apollo, Jupiter and Mercury, whom the pagans think are gods. Antichrist will be lifted up above these gods because he will make himself greater and stronger than all of them. He will be lifted up not only above these gods, but also "above everything that is worshipped," that is, above the Holy Trinity, which alone is to be worshipped and adored by every creature. "He will exalt himself in such a way that he will be enthroned in God's Temple, displaying himself as if he were God."

As we said above, he will be born in the city of Babylon, will come to Jerusalem, and will circumcise himself and say to the Jews: "I am the Christ promised to you who has come to save you, so that I can gather together and defend you who are the Diaspora." At that time all the Jews will flock to him, in the belief that they are receiving God, but rather they will receive the devil. Antichrist also "will be enthroned in God's Temple," that is, in Holy Church, and he will make all Christians martyrs. He will be lifted up and made great, because in him will be the devil, the fountainhead of all evil "who is the king above all the sons of pride" (Job 41:25).

Lest the Antichrist come suddenly and without warning and deceive and destroy the whole human race by his error, before his arrival the two great prophets Enoch and Elijah will be sent into the world. They will defend God's faithful against the attack of the Antichrist with divine arms and will instruct, comfort, and prepare the elect for battle with three and a

half years of teaching and preaching. These two very great prophets and teachers will convert the sons of Israel who will live in that time to the faith, and they will make their belief unconquerable among the elect in the face of the affliction of so great a storm. At that time what scripture says will be fulfilled "If the number of sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, their remnant will be saved" (Rom. 9:27). When, after three and a half years, they shall have finished their preaching, the Antichrist's persecution will soon begin to blaze out. He will first take up his arms against them and will slay them, as it says in the Apocalypse: "And when they have finished their witness the beast which will ascend from the abyss will make war against them and will conquer and kill them" (Apoc. 11:7). After these two have been slain, he will then persecute the rest of the faithful, either by making them glorious martyrs or by rendering them apostates. And whoever shall have believed in him will receive his brand on the forehead (Apoc. 20:4).

Since we have spoken about his beginning, let us say what end he will have. This Antichrist, the devil's son and the worst master of evil, as has been said, will plague the whole world with great persecution and torture the whole people of God with various torments for three and a half years. After he has killed Elijah and Enoch and crowned with martyrdom the others who persevere in the faith, at last God's judgment will come upon him, as Saint Paul writes when he says, "The Lord Jesus will kill him with the breath of his mouth" (2 Thess. 2:8). Whether the Lord Jesus will slay him by the power of his own might, or whether the Archangel Michael will slay him, he will be killed through the power of Our Lord Jesus Christ and not through the power of any angel or archangel. The teachers say that Antichrist will be killed on the Mount of Olives in his tent and upon his throne, in the place opposite to where the Lord ascended to heaven. You ought to know that after Antichrist has been killed the Judgment Day will not come immediately, nor will the Lord come to judge at once (Isa. 3:14); but as we understand from the Book of Daniel, the Lord will grant the elect forty days to do penance because they were led astray by the Antichrist. No one knows how much time there may be after they shall have completed this penance until the Lord comes to judgment; but it remains in the providence of God who will judge the world in that hour in which for all eternity he predetermined it was to be judged.

EPILOGUE

So, Your Highness, I your loyal servant, have faithfully fulfilled what you commanded. I am prepared to obey in other matters what you shall deem worthy to command.