

169. The Antichrist Prophesied in Second Thessalonians has Come.

Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. 2 Thess. 2, 3.4.

Our Church says in one of her public confessions, in the Smalcald Articles: "The Pope is the very Antichrist." Luther and the Lutheran Church confess that the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist.

How did he become the Antichrist? The Roman bishops assumed a haughty demeanor and exalted themselves above the other bishops. Finally, they arrogated to themselves the position of supreme judges in the Church of God and considered themselves the vicegerents of Christ on earth, whom all men, even princes and kings, must obey. The Roman bishop was now considered the visible head of the whole Christian world, the representative of Christ on earth, and the successor of St. Peter, having exclusive possession of the keys of heaven and the right to dictate what was to be taught and believed in the Church. What he laid down in matters of faith was considered binding, even if it was directly contrary to the Word of God. If a man dared to resist the decrees and commands of the Pope, he either had to retract and beg for mercy or he was excommunicated; many faithful confessors of Christ and His Word were even burned at the stake as heretics. The authority of the Pope was so great that he made himself king of kings, ruler of all rulers, and established a tyranny the like of which there never has been on earth.

As God he sat in the temple of God, a fountainhead of error to the world, prohibiting even the reading of the Bible, so that nobody knew what was right or wrong. Surely the Pope of Rome is the very Antichrist. The Antichrist has come, and the end of all things is at hand. Here the shallowness of the Reformed sects is revealed, which hold that Antichrist is yet to come. How is it possible that even some who call themselves Lutherans are in doubt on this point?

Prayer.

O Lord Jesus Christ, we praise Thee with our whole heart and thank Thy great goodness and mercy that Thou didst graciously grant us not only Thy saving Word and the holy Sacraments and didst purge Thy Church of the leaven of papistic doctrine and idolatry, but that Thou hast also redeemed us poor sinners from the realm of darkness, called us to the light of Thy holy Gospel, and translated us into the Kingdom of Grace. Preserve unto us the soul-saving treasure of Thy Gospel in its purity. Yea, Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd, preserve unto us and our descendants Thy Word, for it is our hearts' comfort and joy. Amen.

My Shepherd is the Lord of all;
No want into my lot shall fall
While I have Him beside me.
He makes me rest in pastures green;
And where still waters flow between,
He graciously doth guide me.

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