

# What Does the Bible Teach About the Anti-Christ?

## Introduction:

- A. 1John 2:18-22, 4:1-6; 2John 7
  - 1. New Testament speaks of the Anti-Christ as one who opposes the Lord.
  - 2. Christians need to examine what and who the Antichrist is to clear their understanding of the many misconceptions taught concerning him.
- B. John wrote in the latter part of the first century.
  - 1. Gnosticism had arisen to become a problem in the church and it claimed special knowledge.
  - 2. They developed doctrines of the nature of Christ which were erroneous, based on what they believed to be the incompatibility of humanity and divinity, believing humanity and divinity could not dwell together, so they had to deny either the humanity of Jesus or His divinity.
  - 3. Two schools of thought developed, both of which denied an essential element in the nature of Jesus:
    - a. Docetists denied that Jesus was actually human, that He only appeared to be flesh and blood.
    - b. Cerinthians said Jesus was born as a man and Deity descended on Jesus at His baptism and then left Him on the cross.
- C. The word “antichrist” appears only five times in the Bible, confined to two short letters by the same author, written at the end of first century.
  - 1. In contrast, the word baptism and derivatives appear dozens of times in scripture.
  - 2. Yet, much of the religious world prefers to dwell on the former and dismisses the latter.
- D. Consider the subject of the antichrist in an attempt to dispel some myths while magnifying the truth of this question.

## I. WHAT IS THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST?

- A. Against or in place of: the term “anti-Christ” connotes a movement or sentiment that is detrimental to the cause of the Lord, either overtly or covertly; thus an antichrist is any force working opposed to the Lord
  - 1. A pseudo-Christ or false Christ is one who is pretending to be a substitute or current representative of Christ, a false Messiah; David Koresh years ago of Waco, TX, or Jim Jones of Guyana
  - 2. Our focus is on the antichrist, rather than the pseudochrist, and examines opposition to Christ through doctrines and men who oppose the truth by directly evil means or by subtle attempts at making evil appear righteous in false religions.
  - 3. When we discuss the antichrists, we are talking about any doctrine or man seeking to damage or discredit the truth.
- B. In John’s writings
  - 1. Since John has the distinction of being the only New Testament writer to use the word “antichrist,” we will examine his words first (John is not the only writer to talk about the antichrist concept)

2. 1John 2:18-19 places his readers in the late first century in the last hour, an hour which continues to this day, descriptive of the world's final dispensation prior to its conclusion.
    - a. The disciples had been told that antichrist was coming, and John asserts that even then, many had already come.
    - b. Perhaps they were so focused on the prophecy of false Messiahs that they overlooked the fact that doctrinal error and false teachers were evidence of an antichrist movement.
    - c. This antichrist sentiment is coming from within the church, according to verse 19; it is an apostasy.
  3. 1John 2:22-23 defines antichrist as one who denies the deity of Christ and the Father.
    - a. A special problem in the church then was the influence of Gnosticism upon the disciples.
    - b. Gnostics believed that the flesh was inherently evil and as such, Christ could not have really come in the flesh.
    - c. In addition, they used this view to teach that sin was purely physical, and thus did not impact the spirit, making it permissible.
    - d. A. T. Robertson argues that Cerinthus, a Gnostic leader of the first century, fits well John's accusation against an antichrist (Word Pictures of the N.T., Vol. 6, Page 217)
  4. 1John 4:1-3 prescribes a test for prophets to weed out the antichrist elements.
  5. 2John 7 speaks of the plurality of antichrists and presence in the early world and church.
    - a. They were labeled deceivers and would be found among the false teachers working within the churches of Christ, apostates who deny Christ's deity in the flesh - Col 2:9
    - b. Antichrist is a more general term than modern men believe, who imagine it refers only to one man who would appear at the very end of history to trouble the church, and be put down by Christ in an imaginative battle of Armageddon
- C. Pointing blindly and erroneously toward the antichrist
1. Hal Lindsey in the "Late, Great Planet Earth" announced that "the antichrist is in the world today." (1970)
    - a. He meant to inform us that after 2000 years without any antichrists, the one evil incarnate man had finally come.
    - b. John's writings do not support this concept; antichrists have been present since the early days of the church.
  2. In 1999, Jerry Falwell stated his opinion that the end was near, and the antichrist is probably a preteen boy currently living in Jerusalem.
    - a. Thankfully the reaction to this was not like that of Herod, and Israelis did not take it upon themselves to slay every Jewish male under the age of 21.
    - b. Such assertions are themselves antichrist in that they oppose the truth of the New Testament

- c. Many speculations over the years as to who might be the antichrist: mostly Soviet leaders, Mao Tse Tung, Henry Kissinger; in the spirit of equality, why couldn't the antichrist be a woman, like Madonna, Nancy Pelosi, or Hillary Clinton?

## **II. OPPOSITION TO CHRIST**

### **A. The Adversary's work**

1. In the Gospel accounts, the opposition to Christ provoked and performed by the Adversary is clearly an antichrist movement.
  - a. The Devil is not who John was talking about, but his influence on man and the evil works that result from it.
2. Matt. 4:1-11
  - a. Antichrists seek to overcome Christians with promises similar to these: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and pride of life.
  - b. They will perniciously be found in the doctrines of supposedly pious men - 2Peter 2:18-19
3. Matt. 13:37-39 - Jesus explained the parable of the wheat and tares, and pointed to the Devil as one who sows wicked things alongside of the good seed of the Gospel.
  - a. It is not the Devil doing these things by himself, but rather working through his agents in this world.
  - b. He works, not by demon possession, but by persuasion, enticing men to corrupt the pure doctrine of Christ into something with more convenience and tolerance for sin - 2Tim. 3:1-9
  - c. Such men are anti-Christ, evil sowers of evil seed.
4. At other times in his ministry, Jesus revealed it to be the severest of insults to attribute His work to the devil's power (Matt. 12:24-32) and that the devil is the prince of this world (John 14:30).

### **B. The man of sin - 2Thes. 2:3-12**

1. As Paul did a few months earlier in 1Thes. 4:13-18, the apostle was refuting the erring doctrine that Christ's return was imminent.
2. He re-visits this by stating that certain things must happen before the return of Jesus, a great apostasy, and the revelation of a man of lawlessness.
  - a. The man of sin, part of the apostasy, is identified as one who opposes God exalting himself to a position like God's.
  - b. He was restrained from appearing when Paul wrote, but eventually would appear and then be destroyed by God's breath and presence.
  - c. The man of sin's work would deceive many who might otherwise have been saved.
3. Some commentators apply this text to the succession of Roman emperors, who fit the description in exalting themselves as "Lord God, Caesar" and overwhelmed many saints with threats of death unless they recanted Christ - Rev. 2:10, 3:8

4. The Catholic Church applied it to Protestantism in the Middle Ages, and Protestants have come to apply it to Catholicism; and in fact, both may be right, for both movements tend to pervert the doctrine of Christ in their own way.
    - a. The Pope sits on his throne as the so-called vicar of Christ on Earth, with a scepter in one hand and legislative power in the other - Col. 2:20-23; 1Tim. 4:1-3
    - b. Protestantism edits the gospel by teaching a doctrine of salvation by faith only, deceiving many good people into submitting to the devil's error - James 2:24
    - c. Moslems kill Christians and forbid Bibles in Middle Eastern countries and Africa.
  5. Antichrist sentiments are struck by the words from God's mouth in the New Testament as the sword of the Spirit - Eph. 6:17
  6. Is there a connection between Paul's man of sin and John's antichrist?
    - a. The man of sin is certainly against Christ.
    - b. We need not assume that the man of sin is one person in particular, although history shows that many have attempted to pin that title on the likes of everyone from Napoleon to Bill Gates.
    - c. The man of sin is anyone at the pinnacle of apostasy, and many people have occupied that seat over the years.
- C. 666 - The number of the beast
1. Attempts to pinpoint a single antichrist to end the ages also focus upon the book of Revelation, written to comfort saints of the first century who faced persecution by the Roman Empire.
  2. Jesus uses signs and symbolic imagery to paint a reassuring picture of the triumph of the church over its enemies - Rev. 13:1, 11-18
  3. Is the beast antichrist?
    - a. Of course, anyone or any organization that presents itself as God and works to eliminate Christianity is antichrist.
    - b. This particular antichrist is no longer a threat to the church and its work today.
    - c. We can still find comfort in reading God's record of overcoming antichrists, knowing that He can overcome those who trouble us.

### **III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ANTICHRIST**

- A. Many are looking for a single personality to appear on the scene and fight openly against Christ.
  1. That would be too obvious. Everyone would recognize him and he would deceive very few.
  2. Note the singular and plural usage
  3. There is not just one powerful person opposing Christ. Instead there are many who are secretly, deceptively working in opposition to the Son of God and His people.
- C. Identifying antichrists is possible today

1. Our salvation depends upon understanding who they are and what motivates them - 1John 2:19
2. "They went out from us"
  - a. John, inspired apostle, stood for the revealed word of God
  - b. Those who went out from them taught something else.
  - c. They were anti (opposed to) Christ, hence "antichrists."
- D. This is the key to identifying the antichrists: all who deviate from the word of revealed word of God oppose Christ.
  1. They may appear to be loving personalities, dynamic in persuading people to be saved, live for good works, etc.
  2. Our assessment of these things are subjective; God gets to define good works and loving personalities.
  3. Therein lies the danger: Anyone can become "antichrist"
- E. Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46; John 8:31
- F. We are either with Him or "anti" Him - Matt. 12:30
  1. How can we tell?
  2. The real test: agreement with and acceptance of the same doctrine the apostles taught - 1John 2:24
  3. At the time of John's writing, people were denying that Jesus had come in the flesh. An important point of the epistles of John
  4. This principle is true in any departure from the faith - 1John 4:6
- G. We need not fear the antichrist, for we have been warned, prepared, instructed in how to identify, resist, and defeat him - 2Thes. 2:1-3
- H. Everyone in this world has taken a stand in relation to Christ; we are either on His side, fighting for and living in His kingdom, or we are against Him, His cause and His people.
  1. If one rejects Christ and is against Him and His cause, he needs only to look in the mirror to see the spirit of the antichrist.