

The Antichrist Myth

OUT of the Seven-Year Tribulation position came a host of other imaginative doctrines. Some were contrived whole-cloth, while others were modifications of prior beliefs. Among those ideas was the doctrine of a coming end-time Antichrist who was supposed to do a lot of wicked things at the end of the Christian Era. Unbelievable as it may sound, we are all looking for a mythical end-time ruler who has no biblical support.

Mythical? Impossible. We all *know* that Antichrist is coming, don't we? Not really. Most of what we hear about him is one theologian's theory built upon another's supposition, and those suppositions go all the way back to the 1st Century. Who and where is he? Isn't this how we will know the second coming of Jesus is near, when some fiendish creature in human form takes control of the world?

Despite what some people are saying, the appearance of an Antichrist is *not* a biblical sign of the return of Jesus. To prove it, let's first look at all we have heard about THE Antichrist. Among other things, Antichrist is supposed to . . .

1. Appear at the end of the age.
2. Rule the world for . . .
 - 3½ years as a good leader.
 - 3½ years as a monstrously evil leader.
3. Have the temple rebuilt.
4. Reinstate temple sacrifices for the first 3½ years.
5. Turn against the Jews for the second 3½ years.
6. Stop temple sacrifices in the middle of the 7 years.
7. Cause all to worship him.
8. Start the battle of Armageddon.
9. Persecute the "Great Tribulation" saints and anyone else he can get his hands on.
10. Misc. other legends (depending on school of thought) including that as 666, he is Satan incarnate.

Believe it or not, not one of the above ideas can be directly supported by Scripture. Some came from John Darby who thought the 70th week of Daniel 9:27 was about a Seven Year Tribulation, while others were fabricated out of thin air.

The word “antichrist” does appear in the Bible four times; so who, when, and where is he? Let’s look at every verse that mentions him by name, and don’t worry, you won’t do a lot of reading. If you think there are other verses, please get out your concordance and find them. Though the author has searched the Scripture diligently for over 40 years, he has yet to find another single verse.

Now to get the exact sense of what these verses mean, we need a literal word-for-word translation of the Greek text. The Textus Receptus is best, so the quotations below are from that text:¹

1Jo 2:18 (Green’s Interlinear) Young ones, a last hour it is, and as you heard that the antichrist is coming, even now antichrists many have arisen; from which you know that a last hour it is.

1Jo 2:22 (Green’s Interlinear) Who is the liar except the *one* denying that Jesus not is the Christ? This is the antichrist the *one* denying the Father and the Son.

1Jo 4:3 (Green’s Interlinear) And every spirit which not confesses Jesus Christ in *the* flesh having come, of God not is; and this is the antichrist which you heard that it is coming, and now in the world is already.

2Jo 1:7 (Green’s Interlinear) Because many deceivers went out into the world, those not confessing Jesus Christ coming in *the* flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.²

¹ The Textus Receptus (the received text) is the Greek manuscript from which the King James Version was translated.

² The definite article *τη*, “the,” appears in the Greek text before Antichrist, and it is so translated in the NAS. All who deny Jesus are identified not just as “an” Antichrist, but as THE Antichrist. Some students of Greek believe *τη* to be an indefinite article, but the translators of the KJV, NAS, and NIV, with a full knowledge of the English language, have all translated *τη* as definite, so this is a reasonable assertion.

Difficult as it may be to believe, that's every verse. Only four verses in the entire Bible mention Antichrist by name. That doesn't agree with all we have heard about THE Antichrist, does it? Maybe not, but those are still all the references to him in the Bible. Everything else we have heard is what people have conjectured from other scriptures. Read those verses in 1st John again, paying particular attention to the last two. Do they say that a special personage, "THE Antichrist," is going to appear in the future? If they do, I fail to see it.

Who do these verses tell us the Antichrist is going to be? They declare that Antichrist is anyone who denies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, or that Jesus is the Christ. "You have heard . . . you have heard." The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle John, is not stating that a specific Antichrist is coming. He only said that you "have heard" that one is coming. To put that in today's language, you "have heard" that warts come from toads and that the moon is made of green cheese. Your having "heard" it doesn't make it so, nor does your saying that you have heard it mean that you believe it. You are not declaring that warts come from toads.

In the same way the Lord isn't saying that Antichrist is coming at some time in the future. He's only saying that "*you have heard*" one was coming. Then He tells you what Antichrist really is. The Holy Spirit is using a figure of speech to straighten out a false 1st Century church belief: "Church, you are sitting there with an imaginary doctrine. The truth is this: "He that denies that Jesus is the Christ, or that denies that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is the Antichrist, and he is already in the world."

One has to ask why John wrote his Gospel and three epistles so late in life? What was his special mission? Well, by 100AD, John has seen what has happened to sound doctrine during his own lifetime. Just as Paul warned, wolves have come in among the sheep and are rending the flock. John has seen the heresies of the Marcianites, Gnostics, Nicolaitans and others with his own eyes. The purpose of John's Gospel and three epistles is the debunking of these false doctrines. A future Antichrist is one of them. John says very plainly that anyone who denies the basic truths about the Lord Jesus is THE Antichrist, and the Christian Era has been full of them.

But has the Church really heard John? It doesn't seem so. For centuries, numerous pseudo-prophets have pontifically announced which conqueror, potentate, pope, or guru had to be the one and only, genuine, bona fide, and authentic real life Antichrist. Every one of them has been wrong. Satan's generals are not out there planning massive military campaigns. They are not driving around in staff cars, or directing battles from front line bunkers. Satan is battling for our hearts and minds. Satan is a spirit, and he is fighting a spiritual battle for the souls of men (Rev 18:8-13).

His real generals and high priests are in our high schools, churches and college campuses, even Christian ones. Since we are not tuned in to the kind of battle we are supposed to be fighting, we don't even know who Satan's real generals are: Professor So-and-so, Pastor what's-his-name, Theologian Big-name. Do I sound way too critical? Well, this is what the Bible says:

2 Cor 11:14-15 For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Any who holds or teach a doctrine that reject Jesus as the Savior of the world is THE Antichrist: biggies like Kant, Spinoza, Freud, Jung, Spengler, Hume, Voltaire, Sagan, Moon, the New Age, the ACLU and the National Education Association and the man next door. God sees the rebellion in each fallen man's heart individually, so every person who turns from His Son is the Antichrist.

THE MAN OF SIN

Many try to attribute "Man of Sin" of 2 Th:2 to the Antichrist, but that's not what those verses mean at all. To get it in context, Paul was addressing doctrinal issues of importance to believers in Thessalonika. It seems that they were just sitting around on some mountain top, waiting for Jesus to return and since that time, this passage of Scripture has been totally misunderstood. For instance, haven't we heard there will be a great revival before Jesus returns? Guess what? That is exactly the opposite of what 2Th 2:3 teaches:

2Th 2:2-3 “That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 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.”

So a departure from the faith precedes the return of Jesus, not a revival. But, who is this “man of sin . . . the son of perdition?” The verse is usually thought to be about the Antichrist, but maybe we should look at the passage in a different light:

2Th 2:4 “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

What temple do you suppose the Lord was speaking of in that verse? In Old Testament times, God’s temple was in Jerusalem, but where is the temple of God in the New Testament?:

1Co 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

2Co 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God.

Eph 2:22 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God.

A physical temple in Jerusalem might be applicable for a Jew sovereignly blinded, but it is heresy for the Church to think of its temple as a building on Mount Moriah. Furthermore, 1Th 2:16 implies that the books to this church were written after the temple was destroyed in 70AD, and Paul makes no mention of building a new one.³ If Paul in 2Th 2 is speaking of a physical temple in Jerusalem, then he departed from the Holy Spirit’s revelation to him

³ 1Th 2:16 “Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” Some scholars would like to early-date this epistle, but the “wrath” Paul speaks of here is most likely the 70AD destruction of Jerusalem and the 2nd temple.

of where God's temple is now located. That is most unlikely.

2Th 2:3 "*a falling away first*": It is almost impossible to believe how different the Church is today from what it was just 60 years ago. In this short a time, there has been worldwide a falling away from the Lord unprecedented in church history. Europe was the cradle of the Reformation, yet less than 3% of today's Europeans still cling solidly to the faith. In our own land, it is estimated that the true followers of the Lord do not exceed 10% of the total population; some very conservative groups hold that no more than 5% of Americans are really Christians.

Neglected are the very precepts that lead us to kneel at the foot of the cross in broken-hearted repentance. The word Gospel means good news, and the good news is that Jesus died to save us from our sins. We have adopted a materialistic and self-serving theology.⁴

Despite a population explosion in the third world, there are fewer missionaries in foreign lands than there were just a generation ago. Thousands of retiring missionaries are returning home with only a handful sent out to replace them. Access to many foreign fields is restricted by their local leaders or by frightfully dangerous local conditions. In so-called New Testament churches here at home, the Bible is treated with a carelessness that would have horrified our forefathers. Scripture is ignored or culturally interpreted to fit the lifestyle of the congregation. TV ministries, many of them openly heretical, have corrupted the Word of God with false doctrine, but are still looked up to by many as trustworthy servants of God.

1Ti 4:1-2 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

⁴ Here are three of many verses which invalidate today's prosperity doctrines: Joh 16:2 "the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service;" Joh 16:33 "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world;" 2Ti 3:12 "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

The everyday Christian has been programmed to accept denominational dogma, regardless of whether or not that dogma is in line with Scripture. As a result, modernistic seminaries now have a death grip on most local evangelical churches. Churches cannot last long if their leaders do not believe the Bible they have been commissioned to defend. Current events are showing this to be true. Major denominations are on the verge of collapse. Few are in sufficient obedience to Scripture to recognize the demonic origin of the doctrines now being taught. Along with the great apostasy, from the above we can see that the man of sin is already in the Church, Just as Jesus asked, “Will faith be on the earth” when He returns? Luk 18:8.

2Th 2:3 *“the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition”*: Since the second world war, there have been an ever-increasing number of atheists, agnostics, and other cultists in the lawless state of total rebellion against God. 1Jo 3:4 tells us that sin is lawlessness. The rebellious unredeemed, still in their sins, are men of lawlessness, and doomed to destruction. At no other time in the Christian Era has there been such an open disregard for the Bible. Compare with Joh 17:12, Heb 10:3-9.

2Th 2:4 *“who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship”*: Secular humanists state that man is a god, their manifesto declaring (and I hate to write it): “Man made God in His own image.” By these declarations they exalt themselves above every god. They replace God in their hearts with scientific formula, trading a knowledge of the Giver of Life for a limited understanding of what He has made.

v.4 (cont.) *“so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God”*: That phrase, by itself, shows us that the “man of sin” is not a human being, but a spirit. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Only a spirit being could take his seat in the human heart. In some of the charismatic churches, demons are

invading people, giving false gifts and claiming to be the Holy Spirit.⁵ Hindu guru or charismatic, the doctrines are the same. The wrappings have been changed to trap the simple.

Leaders of numberless cults declare: “Look to the god within yourself,” or “Get in touch with your inner self” or “Channel with a master.” This is supposed to be an inner god-like voice communicating with an ascended spirit (translate that a demon). All this suggests that a god-like power is within man himself. This places man’s ego in the temple of the Holy Spirit, claiming an authority there, which is God’s alone:

2 Th 2:5-7 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, [more accurately *restrains*] until he be taken out of the way.

2:8-10 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

v.7 “*only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way*”: Throughout the Christian Era, the Holy Spirit has quickened the heart of man to his need for a Savior. However, in Gen 6:3, the Lord tells us that He would restrain His Spirit from doing so at some future time. Though the Holy Spirit will never leave the heart of the believer, the Lord makes no such promise to those who remain in rebellion to Him. One godly old pastor said, “I don’t see the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of the unsaved like I used to.”

⁵ The enemy’s intellect should not be underestimated. This satanic attack is brilliant. Satan has brought false doctrine and false spiritual manifestations into the Church under the guise of being the Holy Spirit of God. Many are afraid to speak against these sins for fear of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. If we don’t know our Bibles, we get caught in this trap. This was the subject of *Demons in the Church*, Ellis Skolfield (Fort Myers, FL, Fish House Publishing) 1993.

v.9 “*with all power and signs and lying wonders*”: We now have guided missiles and hydrogen bombs (bringing fire down out of Heaven), nuclear submarines and interstellar probes, movie special effects, and TV wizards. TV is a wonder, indeed, showing an “image” of the world system, and many people worship it several hours a day (Rev 13:15). It shows mostly ungodliness and lies. If these are not false wonders, what does it take to qualify?

2:11-12 For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Psychologists deny the existence of sin, ignoring that Jesus is the only solution for the death sentence of which we are all worthy. Paleontologists deny the very existence of God with their multibillion-year calendars. Medical science can keep bodies alive long after God has taken the soul. So the man of sin is all around us.

The spirit of Antichrist is in the worldly, the disbelieving, the liberal scholar who tries to disprove the Bible. Unrepentant men, even “disguising themselves as servants of righteousness” (2Co 11:15). The man of sin isn’t some superhuman tyrant just waiting for the right time to take over the world. The spirit of Antichrist is in the unmerciful landlord, the drug pusher, the dishonest businessman, the occultist, the Satan worshiper with his hidden rites and the crooked judge who steals from widows for a price. Today, he is everyone’s neighbor, from the racketeer in our own home town, to the Islamic terrorist in some hidden safe-house.