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# The Antichrist

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For several hundred years the hot topic among many generations has been "who is the Antichrist?" So called biblical prophecy experts throughout the years have uncovered "proof" as to the identity of the archenemy of Christianity. Some asserted that the antichrist is (was) Saddam Hussien. If your money was on him you lost out the day he was hung. If you are a fan of the *Left Behind* series the Secretary-General of the United Nations is your pick. Perhaps, the antichrist is a future president of the United States or a genetically-engineered super-human clone?

Oddly enough, several well-known individuals of the past and present have come forward declaring to be the antichrist. The German philosopher and son of a Lutheran minister, Friedrich Nietzsche, claimed to be the antichrist in his book, *The Antichrist*. A popular Latin American minister, Jose Luis de Jesus Miranda, asserts that he is not only God but also the antichrist. He believes the Bible is misinterpreted and the antichrist is Christ's earthly replacement. His body is covered with tattoos of the number 666. More recently in a California rehab center Britney Spears shaved her head and screamed "I am the Antichrist!" Apparently there is an antichrist to appeal to every element of society.

## Premilleinnial View of the Antichrist

In Christian eschatology (the study of the end-times) the Antichrist has come to mean a person, likeness of a person or other object that is the personification of evil. Some have picked out men from the Bible who were the antichrist, such as, Simon the Sorcerer or Judas Iscariot. Early Christians who have endured persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire often pointed to one of the Roman emperors like Nero or Caligula. Each generation seems to find its favorite nemesis who fits the role of antichrist: Attila the Hun, Mohammed, czar Peter the Great, Napoleon, Hitler, Gorbachov, and even George Bush.

The most popular choice for the antichrist throughout history has been the Pope in Rome. Many leaders of the Protestant Reformation identified either a specific Pope or the papal office with the antichrist. They include such famous reformers as, Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, John Calvin, John Knox and Huldreich Zwingli. Even the translator of the Bible into English, William Tyndale and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, publically denounced the Pope as the antichrist. As late as 1959 the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod formerly declared "we

reaffirm the statement of the Lutheran Confessions, that 'the Pope is the very Antichrist.'" While giving a speech at the European Parliament in 1988 Pope John Paul II was loudly denounced as the Antichrist by the Leader of the Free Presbyterian Church, Ian Paisley.

The Catholic church in turn as denounced the son of Martin Luther as the Antichrist, along with other leaders of the Protestant Reformation.



## The Antichrist is not...

Before determining who the Antichrist is it may be advantageous to first demonstrate who he is not. The Antichrist is not a false Christ or pseudochrist like David Koresh who a few years ago in Waco claimed to be the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus clearly warned His disciples that *"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible even the elect"* (Matt. 24:23,24). As will be seen latter in this study the Antichrist's beliefs would naturally preclude him from claiming to be Christ.

Apocalyptic passages are most often appealed to as proof of the Antichrist's identity. Many mistake the Antichrist with the *"man of sin"* in 2 Thessalonians 2:2-4. Except this man of sin tries to show that he is God. Others claim that the Beast of Revelation 13 is the Antichrist. Certainly, there are similarities, but the two terms should not be used interchangeably. Other passages in Revelation are employed as proof that the Antichrist will be an Israelite of the tribe of Dan (Gen. 49:17; Rev. 7:1-8). Neither can the Antichrist be identified with 666. This is the number of man, not "a" or "the" man. The number 6 means imperfect, that is, one less than seven which is perfection. Man is therefore imperfect, imperfect, imperfect.

Finally, the Antichrist is not the Devil in spite of the fact that he is against Christ and is the author of all lies. The Devil knows and believes Jesus is the Christ. Nor is the Antichrist the son of Satan as popularized in the movie, *The Omen* where Damien bears a "666" birthmark. It should be noted the recent remake of *Omen* opened in theaters on 6/06/06.

## "Antichrist" as Used in the New Testament

The apostle John uses the term just five times: twice in 1 Jn 2:18 ("antichrist is coming...many antichrists have come"); once in 1 Jn 2:22 ("He is antichrist who denies..."); again in 1 Jn 4:3 ("this is the spirit of the antichrist..."); and finally in 2 Jn 7 ("a deceiver and an antichrist"). John does not say one word about the Antichrist is his Revelation. Any honest student of the Bible can learn all there is about the Antichrist from these four passages in John's first two epistles. Everything else about the Antichrist is pure

speculation.

The New Testament Greek term is a compound of *anti* meaning "opposed to or against" and *khristos* means "messiah or Christ." Therefore, the basic meaning of this noun is one who is opposed to the Christ or against Christ. If you were to describe someone who was opposed to smoking or abortion you would say they were anti-smoking or anti-abortion. The term "antichrist" would be inclusive of anyone who is against or opposed to Christ. James said that anyone who loves this world is against God (Js. 4:4). Christ warned that any person who was not with Him was against Him or "antichrist" (Matt. 12:30).

## Biblical View of the Antichrist

According to the Bible how many Antichrist are there? Is Antichrist a single entity or many distinct persons? Of the five



occurrences of the term: once it is in plural form ("even now many Antichrists have arisen" in 1 Jn 2:18-19) and four times it is singular in number. However, the contexts of each of these passages clearly identifies the Antichrist with plural pronouns or nouns: "they went out...if they had been...none of them" (1 Jn. 2:19); "many deceivers" (2 Jn 1:7). Apparently, "antichrist" is a more

general term than modern men had been led to believe.

Who are these Antichrists who have gone out into the world? Those who have denied the messiahship of Christ. *"He who denies that Jesus is the Christ"* (1 Jn. 2:22). Those who are against Christ are those who deny the deity of Christ and His Father *"He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son"* (1 Jn. 2:22) and those who will not confess Jesus was God's Son (1 Jn. 2:23). Those who are opposed to Christ are those who deny His Humanity. *"And every spirit that does not confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist"* (1 Jn 4:2). *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist"* (2 Jn. 7). Early gnostics (such as, the Doceists and Ceninthians) were known to have denied the Son of God coming in fleshly form because they held that all flesh was sinful. Belief in the humanity of Jesus is essential for the Son of God to be our: Redeemer (1 Jn. 1:7); propitiation for our sins (1 Jn. 2:2); mediator (1 Tim. 2:5); faithful and compassionate High Priest (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15), etc.

Can a twenty-first century Christian be an Antichrist? Anyone who is against the messiahship, deity or incarnation of Christ would be an Antichrist. As mentioned above, there are many of them in the world. The answer is a resounding - YES!

When will or did the Antichrist come? An ad was sent out several years ago for a religious meeting where one of the topics was announced as: "The Antichrist Is In the World Today."

This would be of no surprise to a diligent student of the scriptures. These Antichrists have been around for nearly 2000 years. John affirmed that the Antichrist was *"now already in the world"* (1 Jn. 2:18). Many of them *"have gone out into the world"* (2 Jn. 7). If you listen to the myriad of end-time prognosticators you will learn that the Antichrist will show up to usher in the last days. Again it is written in the first epistle of John, *"children, it is the last hour"* (1 Jn. 2:18). We are in the last days, which is, the Christian era (Heb. 1:1-2; Acts 2:16-17; 1 Jn. 4:3). The time of the end of the world can not be understood by the sign of the Antichrist's appearing. Jesus Himself could not pinpoint a date for His return. He could not even narrow it down to the nearest century. Concerning His Second Coming Jesus affirmed to His Apostles, *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only"* (Mt. 24:36).

Where is the Antichrist to appear? Is it Jerusalem? Is it Washington D.C.? John said, *"They went out from us"* (1 Jn. 2:19). These Antichrist were those that had professed Christianity. Some, however, assume that these Antichrists were never really Christians because John goes on to say that they *"were not of us"* (1 Jn. 2:19). This does not preclude them from having legitimately been disciples at one time. After all, Judas was excluded from the apostleship having transgressed and gone *"to his own place"* (Acts 1:25). But at one time Judas had *"obtained a part in this ministry"*, that is, the apostleship with Peter and the rest (Ac. 1:17). Know this, today there are many Antichrists distressing the furtherance of the Gospel through deceptive lies against Christ.

#### Protection from the Antichrist

John is warning Christians of his day of the current danger posed by those who were Antichrists. Today, many have gone out into this world and present just as much a danger to the children of God as they did in the first century. How shall Christians protect themselves from the Antichrists?

The early Christians had a defense against the Antichrist. John said, *"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things"* (1 Jn. 2:20). This anointing helped them to know the truth and taught them and abided in the truth (1 Jn. 2:21,27). This is referring to the miraculous gift which enabled early Christian to discern the *"spirits"* (1 Cor. 12:10). We have the ability to test the spirits (1 Jn. 4:1) by comparing them to the revealed Word of God through His apostles and prophets.

Another protection afforded to all Christians was to abide in the teachings of Christ (1 Jn. 4:6; 2 Jn. 9). Abiding in Christ meant keeping His commandments and being faithful to His teaching (1 Jn. 2:24). By abiding in Him *"we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming"* (1 Jn. 2:28).

#### Summary

The Antichrist is not one individual, but many. The

Antichrist is not yet to come, but many Antichrists have been at work for centuries. All Antichrists are liars (1 Jn. 2:22) because they deny the truth about Christ being the Messiah, being the Son of God and coming in the flesh. All liars will have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

The term "antichrist" is only found five times in the New Testament. Still, myriads of articles, sermons, Bible studies and books focus on this subject as if it were the most important religious topic in the world. In contrast, the term baptism is found dozens and dozens of times yet few are willing to ponder its vast importance to their souls now and for eternity. Stop fretting and focusing on the Antichrist and make sure you have truly obeyed Christ's command to be baptized for your salvation. Jesus promised *"He that believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mark 16:16).

— Daniel R. Vess

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Worship Service.....5:00 pm

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Bible Study.....7:30 pm

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by Daniel R. Vess