

The Antichrist

By Steve Pruitt

In the last few years the Christian community has been flooded with books and movies depicting the last days before the coming of Jesus and the years following his appearing. For the most part these fictional renderings depict a sudden and quiet exit of the church from earth before a horrible seven year tribulation period and the entrance of a powerful man known as the antichrist. Those unfortunate people who are “left behind” after the “great escape” of the church are given another opportunity to serve God and reject this powerful political figure who will then rule the world.

Debates have been waged over the years as to the identity of this antichrist. Some people have even gone so far as putting a name with the title. For instance: in the 1980s it was speculated that Ronald Wilson Reagan was the antichrist because all of his names had six letters, thus the number of the man was 666. But, what does the bible teach us about this “antichrist?” Is it really one man? Does he really come to power after the church is “raptured?” Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians wrote this:

Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 NKJV

Let’s recap the sequence of events found in verse three. First, there is the falling away and the man of sin, the son of perdition is revealed. Next, the saints are gathered to Jesus. Paul really couldn’t have made it any clearer to his readers. The gathering of the saints to Jesus will not occur until the man of sin, the son of perdition (who most believe to be the antichrist) has been revealed. If you have believed the stories portrayed in the recent end times books and movies then you have fallen victim to the very thing Paul was warning the Thessalonians against when he said, *Let no man deceive you.*

The Greek word translated antichrist is antichristos which means an opponent of the Messiah. Antichrist(s) is found five times in four verses in the bible; all in the books of First and Second John.

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

1 John 2:18 KJV

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

1 John 2:22 KJV

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

1 John 4:3 KJV

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

2 John 7 KJV

Here are the characteristics John gives of antichrist:

1. Is coming and many have already come
2. Is a liar
3. Denies that Jesus is the Christ.
4. Denies the Father and the Son
5. Is now already in the world
6. Does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh
7. Is a deceiver

John conveys that not only is an antichrist coming but in fact many have already come which meant that in his day they were living in the last hour. This certainly contradicts today's popular teaching that the antichrist will appear only after the church has been removed from the earth. Unless of course the Apostle John missed the rapture. He further says that the antichrist was already in the world. If the antichrist is a man and was alive in John's day then he would be a very old man by now. But, as we have just listed, antichrist is anything that denies Jesus Christ as the Messiah and that he has come into the world. No doubt John had in mind the many Jewish religious leaders, among others, who refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

John also wrote this speaking of the "many" antichrists, *These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us.* (1 John 2:19 NLT) John clearly states that antichrist comes from within the Christian church; not from the political arena after the church is gone. In fact, John is so certain that antichrist had come in his day that he exhorts the church to stand against it (2 John 7-11) and encourages the church that they already have victory over antichrist because greater is he that is them than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4).

In our opening scripture, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, Paul gives the description of a man that many believe to be the antichrist. This person is known as "the man of sin" and the "son of perdition." Is this speaking of a single man? In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul uses the phrase "the man of God." Also, in Romans 13:4 he uses the phrase "the minister of God." Are we to believe that there is only one man of God or one minister of God? Obviously Paul was speaking of many men who would fit those descriptions down through history.

Furthermore, in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 Paul states speaking of the "man of sin," that this "mystery of lawlessness" is already at work. And he goes on to say in verse eight that he will continue to work until the Lord returns and consumes him with the brightness of his coming. If Paul was speaking of one single man this man would be somewhere around 2000 years old.

The phrase "son of perdition" is found two times in scripture. Once in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 and the other in John 17:12. In John 17:12 the reference to the son of perdition is made concerning Judas who betrayed Jesus. From all indications Judas was a follower of Jesus. He did everything the other disciples did and even confessed Jesus as his master. Yet, in time he became an instrument of Satan by betraying Jesus with a kiss. Judas became the ultimate deceiver which perfectly fits the definition of antichrist. He came out from them because, even though he looked like them, he was not of them. Thus, this "man of sin" and "son of perdition" will arise, not from the realm of government, but from within in the Christian church.

The question remains about "the beast" we read about in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Many end times teachers have equated this beast as the

one single antichrist. First of all the word antichrist is not found in the Revelation. The beast does have the characteristics of antichrist, but to suggest it is a man is simply irresponsible exegesis. In scripture a "beast" represents a kingdom. This can be found in Daniel 7 where Daniel records a dream given to him by God concerning the end times. Since a beast represents a kingdom it stands to reason that the beast in the Revelation is a kingdom and not a single man.

Don't be deceived by the books and the movies. Let the Word of God speak for itself. Antichrist has always been among us. But, greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world.

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