

THE ANTICHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

When I first heard about the antichrist, I had a sense of great mysteriousness associated with it, and am sure that most people will have the same thinking. Nevertheless, down through the centuries, believers have held the conviction that, some day, the antichrist will make his appearance as the head of a great kingdom of evil upon earth.¹ The scriptures give us a good picture of when he will appear, how long he will exercise his power, the extent of his empire, the intensity of his hatred of God and His people, and the final stages of his career that will end in sudden catastrophic judgment from heaven, when Jesus Christ comes to rule and reign. This paper will look at what the scripture has to say about the antichrist, and the things that are mentioned about him therein.

WHO IS THE ANTICHRIST?

A survey of historical teachings about the antichrist brings two main lines of thought. The first line of thought is that the antichrist is a power or movement that is active now, and not a futuristic thing;² and

¹ Oswald J. Sanders, *Certainties of Christ's Second Coming*, Manila Phil: OMF Literature, 1977, pp. 59-60.

² R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St John's Revelation*, Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Publishing, 1966, p. 388. Lenski says that the two wild beasts of Rev 13

the second line of thought is that the antichrist is a human person at the end of history. The second line of thought does not exclude antichristian tendencies and powers; but it sees all these as eventually being consummated in the figure of the antichrist. Traditionally, there has been strong preference for the personal concept of the antichrist.³ This preference is based largely on 2 Thess 2:8, where the appearance of the lawless one is connected to the coming of Christ, in that the lawless one will be overthrown and destroyed by the power and splendour of the Lord Jesus Christ. The entire description in 2 Thess 2:3-10 is of a personal character. Names are used of him that would apply only to a person, such as, “man of lawlessness”, one who will not bow down to authority, and “son of perdition”, a term used of Judas Iscariot in John 17:12.

Furthermore, in 1 John 2:18-22, John distinguishes between the “antichrist” and the many “antichrists”, who have arisen in the past. John refers to the antichrist as a person. He performs actions that only a person can perform. He exalts himself, opposes all good and God, takes his seat in the temple of God, and proclaims himself to be God. Like Christ, he performs signs and wonders, but through demonic powers. Just like Jesus, he has his parousia and his epiphany. In Rev 20:10, he is to be punished, and one can only punish a person, and not a system. In John 5:43, Jesus may have had this mysterious figure in mind, when He said to the Jews, “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him.”

Therefore, we are justified in believing that, in the end times, evil will become incarnate, in the form of a towering figure, the antichrist, who will dominate the world scene. Satan will employ a human personality, over whom he has complete control, to attempt the overthrow of God, and the ruin of His world. In scripture, the antichrist is symbolised in various ways. In Dan 7:8, 24-26, he is symbolised as the “little horn”;

are operating now, and have operated for a long time since Christ’s exaltation. See also Berkouwer, 1972, p. 261.

³ Sanders, *Certainties*, p. 60.

in Dan 11:36-45, he is “the king who exalts himself”; in Mark 13:11, he is the “abomination that causes desolation”; in 2 Thess 2:3-10, he is the “man of lawlessness”; in Rev 11:7, he is the “beast from the abyss”; and in Rev 13:1 and 13:11, he is “the beast from the sea”.

WHEN WILL THE ANTICHRIST APPEAR?

Many have made their guesses, and history has proved them wrong. The fact is that we cannot find any information in the Bible, which will enable us to set a date for his manifestation. The Bible, however, does give us some signs of when the antichrist is likely to appear, but no specific details as to years and dates. For instance, in 2 Thess 2:7-8, “the secret power of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth, and destroy by the splendour of His coming.” This appears to describe the event of Christ’s second coming, and, therefore, for those of us who hold the pre-tribulation view, we believe that the rapture⁴ will already have taken place. The One who holds the power of lawlessness back, which is the Holy Spirit, working in the Body of Christ, the church, will be taken away, and then, the antichrist will be revealed. He will appear first as a friend of the Jews, and a promoter of righteousness and peace. He will apparently be successful in dealing with the problems of war, famine, and pestilence. As Oswald Smith⁵ puts it, “he is earth’s last great potentate, the most powerful dictator the world has ever seen. . . . No one has ever been able to govern successfully. . . . However, when the antichrist comes, and takes over the reins, he will govern the entire world as it has never been governed before. He will solve problems that no man has ever been able to solve, and, for a while, there will be peace and prosperity.” Then, at the end of three and a half years, midway through the seven years, alluded to earlier on, the antichrist will usher in the great

⁴ This means “to be caught up”, and is a reference to what Paul is talking about in 1 Thess 4:17; 1Cor 15:52; Acts 1:9.

⁵ Oswald J. Smith, *Prophecy: What Lies Ahead?*, London UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962, p. 19.

tribulation, which is a time of greater persecution than the world has ever known.

HOW LONG WILL HE BE IN POWER?

Rev 13:5 tells us that his time of absolute power will be 42 months, that is, three-and-one-half-years. This, however, does not mean that the antichrist will be a powerful world figure for only three-and-one-half-years. Dan 9:27 says that he will make a firm seven-year treaty with the Jews.

When his position is well established, and he achieves this place of absolute dominance in the world, he will break the treaty in the middle of the seven years. Therefore, in effect, he will be in power for a total of seven years.⁶

THE EXTENT OF HIS POWER

When the antichrist emerges on the stage of world history, he will assert his authority in all realms, that is, political, economic, and religious. He will exercise ruthless political control over the nations. In Rev 13:7-8, the antichrist is given authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation, and all inhabitants of the earth will worship him. In Dan 11:40-45, he will invade many countries, and sweep through them like a flood, and, in the process, he will annihilate many. He will maintain absolute economic control of the world. Rev 13:16-17 says that “he causes all . . . to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, so that no one could buy or sell, unless he had the mark”. He will also gain religious control of the world, and will exert intolerable religious pressure on mankind to worship him as God, and if they do not worship him, he will put them to death. In Rev 13:11-16, he will use his false prophet to make people worship him. The false prophet will perform miraculous signs and wonders, even causing fire to come down from heaven in full view of men, and they will be astounded and deceived. He will set up an image of the antichrist, and give life to the image, so

⁶ Richard W. Dehaan, *The Antichrist and Armageddon*, Grand Rapids MI: Radio Bible Class, 1968, p. 9.

that it can speak, and all men will be forced to worship this image. Those who refuse will be killed.

THE INTENSITY OF HIS HATRED OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

From his appearance in Rev 13, the antichrist will blaspheme God, and is Satan's instrument to try to fight God and His people. In Dan 11:36, he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. His utter hatred for the Jews will be shown in the middle of the seven-year treaty, when he will stop worship in the temple, and set up an abomination. Not only the Jews, but also the entire world, will suffer, and God's people, in countless thousands, will be tortured and martyred. In Rev 6:9-11, John saw the souls of these martyrs crying out for revenge for their blood. This shows that there will be believers, who will suffer death at the hands of the antichrist during the tribulation. When God sends his two witnesses, the antichrist will kill them, but God will raise them up after three-and-a-half days (Rev 11:7-11).

THE DEFEAT OF THE ANTICHRIST

Inevitably, this outright defiance of God will reach its climax in the confrontation of the forces of evil and the mighty power of God in the Battle of Armageddon. In Rev 19:19, John saw the beast (antichrist) and the kings of the earth assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse (Jesus Christ), and against His army. There will be a showdown between the forces of evil, headed by Satan, operating in the antichrist, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although the army of Christ will ride out with Him for this battle, Christ Himself will actually destroy His enemies with the sword that comes out of His mouth. The description of this battle in Rev 19:11-21 is swift and brief, for there will not be any long, drawn-out fighting. It is supernaturally brought to an end, where the Lord Jesus Christ will merely blow on the antichrist, where he will be utterly powerless, and will be defeated and consigned to his eternal doom. Rev 19:20 depicts this clearly, "and the beast (antichrist) was seized, and, with him, the false prophet, who performed the signs in his presence, by which he

deceived those who had received the mark of the beast, and those who worshipped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone”.

CONCLUSION

The antichrist is the personification of the culmination of all that is against Christ. He will rule the world for seven years, within which time he will usher in a period of great tribulation, such as the world has never known. He will hate God and His people, and will defy God, by setting himself up as a god to be worshipped. He will deceive many, and will kill many, particularly those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and refuse to worship the antichrist. Finally, the antichrist and his false prophet will be defeated by the Lord Jesus Christ, when He comes back the second time to earth. Then, as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, he will establish his government, and reign in millennial splendour, power, and glory for 1,000 years.

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