

FOUNDATIONAL TEACHING FROM

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M I N I S T R I E S



The Spirit of Antichrist

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We are living in a time when the battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan is heating up as never before. I believe this is because we are nearing the return of Christ—and the ultimate destruction of Satan’s kingdom.

I want to examine one of the main outworkings of Satan’s kingdom: Satan’s opposition to God and to the church of Jesus Christ. I am going to deal with something that I call the spirit of antichrist. We need to turn, first of all, to the passage in 1 John 2:18–23 where this is primarily described.

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

The working of the spirit of antichrist is going to intensify the closer we get to the end of the age.

Let me explain the real meaning of the term *antichrist*. The word *Christ* is from a Greek word *christos*, which exactly corresponds to the Hebrew word *Mashiach* from which we get Messiah. So when we say “antichrist,” that means anti-Messiah.

“Anti” is a Greek preposition. It has two meanings and both of them apply. First of all, it means “against.” So the first operation is against Messiah. The second meaning is “in place of.” The ultimate purpose is to put a false Messiah in place of the true Messiah. So the total operation is in two phases. When you begin to recognize that, you will see that the spirit of antichrist is extremely active almost throughout the whole professing church.

I have friends who belong to a church in the old-line evangelical stream. And they said to me, “In our church you can talk about Buddha, you can talk about Socrates, you can talk about Martin Luther King, and no one gets upset. But if you talk about Jesus everybody gets upset.” That is the spirit of antichrist. But bear in mind that that is not the end of Satan’s purpose. His purpose is to replace the true Messiah by a false Messiah.

In 1 John 4:2–3 we read:

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus [the Messiah] has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus [the Messiah] has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

If we look at this along with the passage from 1 John 2, we see three forms of antichrist. First of all, there are **many** antichrists. In the course of human history, many antichrists have appeared and been manifested.

Secondly, there is **the** Antichrist—one specific person. That is the final manifestation, the final product of the spirit of antichrist which has not yet been revealed in human history. I believe his shadow has already fallen across the stage, but we have not seen the actual person. But at the end of this age, Scripture makes it clear, there will be one final, supremely evil, supremely powerful ruler, who will dominate the human race for a brief period, who will be **the** Antichrist.

The third form is the **spirit of antichrist**. The spirit of antichrist is the spirit that operates through every antichrist. And John has given us certain marks of the spirit of antichrist which are very important. First of all, it starts in association with God's people. In 1 John 2:19 John writes concerning the antichrists:

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

So antichrist always begins in some way in association with the people of God. But, it does not really belong there, and in due course that will be made manifest. That is one mark of the spirit of antichrist.

The second one is that it denies that Jesus is the Messiah, as we see in 1 John 2:22:

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the [Messiah]?

And then John continues with the third mark:

He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

This is very important. Antichrist does not deny the existence of God. In fact, he claims to be God's representative. What he does deny is the relationship of the Father and the Son within the Godhead.

And the fourth mark of antichrist that is given in 1 John 4 is that it denies Messiah **has come**—it probably believes in Messiah who **will come**, but denies that Messiah has already come.

One Specific Example

Now I want to look at a historical—yet somewhat controversial—example of the spirit of antichrist. I have certainly no desire to offend anybody or attack other religions. What I want to do is present the truth.

A main manifestation of the spirit of antichrist is Islam, the religion of Mohammed. In light of the events of September 11, 2001, in America, I believe it is very important for Christians to be well-informed about Islam.

Mohammed arose in the 7th century in the Arabian peninsula, claimed to be a prophet, and claimed to receive from an archangel the revelation of the religion which became Islam. He also claimed that Islam was the true fulfillment of the Old and the New Testament. He claimed that the Christians and the Gospels had perverted the real truth, but he was restoring it. That is the basic claim of Mohammed. He first believed that because he rejected idolatry and because he rejected the claims of Christianity, the Jewish people would follow him. And when they did not follow him, he turned against them—and became a persecutor of them.

It is a tragedy that many Christians in the West have so misunderstood and underestimated Islam. In Moslem countries throughout the centuries, Christians and Jews have been given the title **dimmy** which means second-class people. While it is true that Islam has not been guilty of anything so terrible as the Holocaust, it has a long record of 13 centuries of suppression and contempt for Christianity and Judaism.

Islam bears most of the marks of the spirit of antichrist. It started in association with the Old and New Testament. It claimed to be the outworking of that revelation of God. But it denies certain basic fundamentals of the Christian faith, like the atoning death of Jesus on the cross. Mohammed taught that Jesus did not die, but that an angel came and spirited Him away before He died. Because there is no death, there is no atonement, and because there is no atonement, there is no forgiveness. And no Moslem has the assurance of sins forgiven at any time.

Second, Islam absolutely denies that Jesus is the Son of God. You can talk to the Moslems about Jesus as a prophet, and they will give you careful attention. In fact, the Koran acknowledges Jesus as a prophet—even as a Savior, even as a Messiah. But when you say He is the Son of God, you bring out the most intense, bitter opposition. In the famous mosque in Jerusalem that is called the Dome of the Rock—built on the site of what

was the Temple of Solomon at one time—the Arabic inscriptions around it twice say, “God has no need of a son.”

If you want to get a better picture of the beliefs and teachings of Islam, I’d like to recommend a book by my friend Jim Croft titled *The Muslim Masquerade*. Jim has researched this topic extensively, and in this book he supports his opinions with several direct quotes from the Koran.

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The Person

Now I want to explore the final manifestation of the spirit of antichrist: **the Antichrist**. I believe this is something that is still in the future. I want to examine some very important passages of Scripture so that you are not unaware of what Satan is planning.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul deals with the appearance, revelation, and manifestation of the Antichrist. He also addresses preparation for the Lord’s return. And they are very closely intertwined, because the final satanic act before the return of the Lord will be the revealing of the Antichrist. In fact, Paul says that the Lord will destroy the Antichrist with the brightness of His coming. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1–2 we read:

Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us.

The word *coming* there is the word *parousia* in Greek, which is normally used for the second coming of Jesus.

Paul wrote, “Don’t be shaken or troubled, neither by spirit, or by word or by letter as if from us,” because he knew that many Christians would be prepared to believe specific predictions as to when Jesus would return. I certainly have heard plenty of these predictions over the course of my ministry, and I am amazed at the multitudes of Christians that become fixated on them.

Let’s look at 2 Thessalonians 2:3:

[Don’t be deceived] as though the day of Christ had come. 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.

The term *falling away* in Greek is *apostacia*, meaning an apostasy—a deliberate rejection of revealed truth.

This verse offers two titles of the Antichrist. First, he is the man of sin—or man of lawlessness. He is the supreme embodiment of man’s rebellion against God and rejection of God’s laws. He is also called the son of perdition, the one who is headed for a lost eternity. Judas Iscariot is the only other person in the New Testament who is called son of perdition. He was a false apostle.

So we see three different names for the same being: the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, the son of perdition. And we have one other important name in Revelation 13:1. This is part of a vision that John had in this revelation.

I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

Here we see the fourth title: the beast—a person who is going to arise to whom Satan (the dragon) will give his power. Why will Satan give his power to this person? Because that will enable this person to gain dominion over the entire human race and to persuade the entire human race to do the one thing that Satan wants most: to worship him. This is his goal. He has been working on this patiently for many centuries, and he is very near to the achievement of his goal at this time.

Notice one of his heads had been “mortally wounded” and healed. There is a sort of false resurrection here. I don’t know whether this person will be assassinated, but he will apparently be dead, and he will return to life.

In Revelation 5:5, John had seen a vision of a scroll in the hand of God, and there was no one who was found worthy to open the scroll. So John was weeping.

But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain.

John was looking for a lion, but the lion is a lamb. That is a deliberate contradiction. God’s appointed ruler does not have the nature of the beast. He has the nature of the Lamb. And He is highly exalted above all others because He laid down His life. He humbled Himself. He went the way of meekness and humility, because He did not resist His arresters and His persecutors. I believe that the church in these days is going to need to display the same nature. And I don’t believe it is easy.

We have seen that the people worshiped the beast. And they all were convinced it was hopeless to make war with the beast. I’m not certain what sort of circumstances will convince “all the world” that it is futile to fight back. When you consider the age of technology and weaponry in which we currently live, it is easy to believe that the situation pictured here could be very close.

In Revelation 13:6–7 we see the antichrist take action:

Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.

He is the open challenger of God. He is not a secret enemy; he shakes his fist in the face of Almighty God. And who do you think granted him permission to make war with—and overcome—the saints? I presume it is God, which is a very sobering thought. Let’s never forget that Christianity is not all easy victory.

Let’s go further and look at verse 8:

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

What a dramatic statement! The entire human race will worship him—except those God has chosen for Himself. I want to finish by looking again at 2 Thessalonians 2:3:

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day [the coming of the Lord] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed.

I believe this falling away is taking place in the world today. Through the centuries there have been church leaders who have been wicked, but they have not openly denied the great basic truths of the Christian faith. In fact, those truths have been the means they used to support their power. But the twentieth century saw church leaders deny the great basic truths of the Christian faith: the deity of Jesus, His virgin birth, His atoning death, His physical resurrection and His return. I don’t believe this existed in any previous century. I believe that we are already confronted with the apostasy. Always remember that the church is the bulwark against error. So Satan has to penetrate the church before he can break through with his error.

Adapted from “The Enemies We Face” (EF1).

For further study we recommend *The Muslim Masquerade* by Jim Croft.

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