

***Title: The Antichrist***

Text: 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8

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Place: Decatur Church of God

Theme: Packed Bags

David Ritchie in NYPress.com wrote, "How do you react when people talk about the end of the world, or about Christ returning to earth?"

During a taxi ride one day in February, a driver in Baltimore asked how I was doing. I told him my plans for the near future.

He turned around, gave me a very strange look, and said: "I don't want to scare you, but the world is gonna end in seven months."

Hundreds of taxis, and I get this guy. But nothing about him seemed dangerous, so I engaged him in conversation. Apparently a disciple of a certain radio preacher, this cabbie could expound at length on why the world was expected to end that September. Drawing on my meager knowledge of eschatology, I asked, "Isn't the antichrist supposed to reign for several years before the world ends?"

"Oh, he's already here!" the driver assured me. "People just don't know it!" At my destination, he left me marveling at the vagaries of belief.

That was in 1994. Ten years later, the world is still here. How that driver explained its survival, I have no idea. If he truly trusted that seven-month countdown, then he must have been disappointed at the dawn of October 1.

Just as there are numerous deceptions as to the coming of Christ, so are the claims of what the New Testament calls "The Antichrist."

**I. What does the New Testament say about the Antichrist?**

A. The term antichrist is found only in John's epistles.

### **1 John 2:18**

*Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.*

### **1 John 2:22**

*Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son.*

### **1 John 4:3**

*But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

### **2 John 1:7**

*Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

- a. Even in the time of John many have come.
- b. Antichrist denies that Jesus is the Christ.
- c. The spirit of the antichrist is already in the world.
- d. Anyone who seeks to convince you that Jesus did not come is an antichrist.

B. The original meaning of the Greek prefix *anti* is “instead of” or “in place of.”

C. Thus *antichristos* means a substitute Christ or a rival Christ.

\* Alexander Ross in *The Epistles of James and John* tells us that the antichrist is both a *rival* Christ and an *opponent* of Christ.

## **II. Satan will be an imitator to the end.**

- A. Since Christ has predicted his second advent, Satan too must have a counterpart.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:6-8**

*And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. <sup>7</sup>For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. <sup>8</sup>And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.*

- a. Antichrists will be revealed.
- b. Antichrists will seek to mimic the uniqueness of Jesus.

\* In other words, antichrists will claim that they are the Messiah and that this is his (the Messiah's) second coming.

- c. They will oppose Christ while acting as Christ.

- B. Ironically, many will believe and follow antichrist.

- a. The stored up wrath of God will have reached the overflow level.
- b. God will allow such a stupor to come over the wicked that they will believe the big lie of Satan.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:11-12**

*For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie <sup>12</sup>and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.*

\* What he is saying is this; the followers of the antichrist have such an allegiance to him that they will follow him regardless of the cost or consequences.

\* Just a short time ago a congressman named Wiener was forced to resign from office due to inappropriate sexual pictures sent over the Internet. I think rightfully so.

Several years ago a former President of the United States performed a sexual act with an aide in the closet of his office. It was discovered and made known to the public. And even though he was caught lying about it, he was permitted to remain in office. And then re-elected.

REGARDLESS OF THE COST OR CONSEQUENCES.

- c. They will follow the antichrist even into the second death.
- d. They will defy God to the very end.

### ***Rev. 16:9-11***

*They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.*

*<sup>10</sup>The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony <sup>11</sup>and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.*

### **III. Just what is an antichrist?**

- A. During the age of tribulation, premillenarians hold that the world will be ruled by a personal antichrist.
  - a. He is supposed to be a person rather than the spirit of antichrist because he is called “that man of sin.”
  - b. But “man” does not always refer to a person.
  - c. It may refer to a power or a body of people.

### ***Ephes. 2:15***

*By abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,*

- d. In a previous message I have already shown that the church that body composed of both Jews and Gentiles is called “one new man.”

B. Antichrist is not just to arise in the future but has already come.

### ***1 John 4:3***

*But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

- a. Whatever is opposed to Christ is antichrist.
- b. And they have already come. Remember...

### ***1 John 2:18***

*Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.*

\* The best-selling *Left Behind* fiction series attempts to describe the various evils that will, according to the authors Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye, accompany the last days. It makes for fascinating reading. As any novelist will admit, it's much easier to get people to read about vice than virtue, about unfolding evil rather than pages upon pages of good.

Another example comes from the pages of church history. Historian Richard Kyle of Tabor College, in Hillsboro, Kansas, (and author of *The Last Days Are Here Again: A History of the Second Coming*,) said in an interview in *Christian History* magazine, "Through much of history, people have been looking more for the Antichrist than for Christ.... There's more interesting speculation about who the Antichrist is."

Some of the leading candidates in church history have been the Roman emperor Nero, Napoleon, and Hitler. But speculation has gone the other way, as well. Some have announced that the Antichrist was the Reformer Martin Luther, and in our day, some have said it was Barak Obama or the reigning pope.

It may be an interesting exercise or even pleasant diversion to think about the Antichrist and the various evils that will attend the last days, but to spend too much time there (as unfortunately some Christians do) is not what God wants. Instead we are to spend most of our energies on, as the King James Version puts it, "whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."