

The Anti-Christ

“Antichrist” is a word used only by one biblical writer. John writes of antichrist five times in two of his epistles. One of these times he writes it as a plural, “antichrists” and another times he refers to “the spirit of antichrist.” John seems to speak of antichrist as an end-time individual, but also as a group of people (“antichrists”) who have “the spirit of antichrist.” But since John himself defines the term for us, let us read 1 John 2:18-23,

18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

John’s primary definition of antichrist is “*the one who denies the Father and the Son.*” He explains this, saying that the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ has not only denied the Son but the Father as well. One cannot claim to worship the Father if he rejects the Son. Jesus was the incarnation of the God of the Old Testament.

This statement appears to be specifically directed at the followers of Judaism who had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, and yet claimed to be worshipping the God of the Old Testament. John disagrees with this, saying, “*whoever denies the Son does not have the Father.*”

John also gives us certain evidences that help us to put the subject of antichrist into context. He tells us plainly in verse 18 that the fact that “*many antichrists have arisen*” is proof that “*it is the last hour.*” John understood that in the “last hour” there would be the rise of antichrist (singular) and antichrists (plural). If there were antichrists already in John’s day, how much more today—for we, too, believe that we are now living in the last hour (of the Pentecostal Age).

John further says that these antichrists had at one time been “of us.” This can mean one of two things: (1) they used to be part of the fig tree nation of Judah that was under God’s covenant, but that by rejecting Jesus as Messiah, they left the covenant and are no longer Judahites in the sight of God; or (2) they were Judahites who at one time accepted Jesus as Messiah, but later rejected Him and presumably returned to Judaism.

Either way, John’s definition of the term “antichrist” would have been understood in his day to be directed at those who called themselves Judahites (“Jews”), claiming to worship the Father, but who had actually rejected the Father by rejecting the Son. John apparently had some revelation that this would occur “at the last hour.” Of course, by this broad understanding of timing, “the last hour” would have begun with the rejection of Jesus and His crucifixion.

But the way John describes it, it is as though he expected to see a greater manifestation of this return to Judaism in the last days. John says that “*from this we know that it is the last hour.*” He does not cite the rejection of Jesus at the time of His crucifixion, but His rejection by Christians returning to Judaism after having first accepted Him. The rejection of Jesus and His crucifixion was really the last hour of the previous age, the Passover Age. A second rejection surrounding His second coming

would signal the last hour of the Pentecostal Age.

Early Church Writers

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in the first century, lived from 30-107 A.D. This makes him a contemporary of all the apostles, though he outlived John by about ten years. He was one who says that as a small child, he was one of the 500 who witnessed the risen Christ. He wrote a number of epistles, including one to the Church in the town of Magnesia. His Epistle to the Magnesians, Chapter 10, reads,

“It is absurd to profess Christ Jesus and to Judaize, for Christianity did not embrace Judaism, but Judaism Christianity, so that every tongue which believeth might be gathered together to God.”

There is a second, longer version of Ignatius’ letter, where this passage reads,

“It is absurd to speak of Jesus Christ with the tongue, and to cherish in the mind a Judaism which has now come to an end. For where there is Christianity there cannot be Judaism.”

Again, Ignatius writes in Chapter 6 of his Epistle to the Philadelphians,

“If anyone preaches the one God of the law and the prophets, but denies Christ to be the Son of God, he is a liar, even as also is his father the devil, and is a Jew falsely so-called, being possessed of mere carnal circumcision.”

Ignatius shows his acquaintance with John’s teachings, not only about Judaism, but also he refers to John 8:44, where Jesus said to the Jews who rejected Him, “*You are of your father, the devil.*” Likewise, when Ignatius refers to “a Jew falsely so-called,” it is apparent that he is referring to Rom. 2:28 and to Rev. 2:9, where the angel tells John,

⁹ I know . . . the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

This is essentially repeated in Rev. 3:9, where we read,

⁹ Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved YOU.”

So we see that Ignatius not only rejects Judaism, but he also puts a great gulf between Judaism and Christianity. He calls Judaism “the synagogue of Satan.” He also plainly believes that those who rejected Jesus, for all their claims, are not the true Judahites (Jews) at all. They are only Jews “falsely so-called.” These are strong words, and they make manifest the great wedge between the good figs and the evil figs.

Justin Martyr (70-155 A.D.), in his “Dialogue with Trypho,” gives us the normal, recommended attitude of Christians toward the evil figs. Justin had met Trypho in Greece some time after the end of the Bar Kokba revolt (135 A.D.) in which Trypho had fought against Rome. Justin shows that Jonah, the type of Christ, was in the earth until the third day, and then he preached the warning to Nineveh that after forty days Nineveh would be overthrown. Justin relates this to Jesus and to Jerusalem, saying that after Jesus was in the grave three days, He taught the disciples forty days, and the disciples bore witness forty YEARS until Jerusalem (“Nineveh”) was overthrown. Justin then tells Trypho in Chapter 108,

“Yet you not only have not repented, after you learned that He rose from the dead, but, as I said before, you have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified, but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. . . . Besides this, even when your city is captured, and your land ravaged, you do not repent, but dare to utter imprecations on Him and all who believe in Him. Yet we do not hate you, or those who, by your means, have conceived such prejudices against us; but we pray that even now all of you may repent and obtain mercy from God, the compassionate and long-suffering Father of all.”

1 John 2:19 gives us the reason why these “antichrists” left the faith. It was God’s purpose to make manifest their hearts. They had to leave in order that it might be clear to all that they really did not have faith in Jesus Christ from the beginning. Perhaps we can say that they had been persuaded in their minds to follow Christ, but they did not really have faith. Faith and persuasion are two different things. To be persuaded is to be convinced by external evidence, such as reading the Bible. Faith comes by hearing the Word. Persuasion is in one’s head; faith is in one’s heart. It is often difficult to tell the difference and one must simply await the harvest to see if the people bear fruit or not. John says to the believers in his letter,

²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. ²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

John was writing to people who did know the truth and who would not depart from it and return to Judaism. John was not writing out of a motive of hatred for those who had rejected Jesus—but neither did he shrink from speaking the plain truth, for only by making the choice clear can men choose to belong to the evil fig tree or the good fig tree.

Christian Judaism in the Last Hour

In the past few decades the delineation between these two trees has become fuzzy once again. More Christians are converting to Judaism than Jews are converting to Christ. Many of those Christians who convert to Judaism think that they can carry Jesus into Judaism. They think that Judaism would be the true religion if only Jesus could be placed on top of all the rabbinic traditions of men. In other words, they think that the true religion is Christian Judaism. They are wrong; there is no Christian Antichrist.

We are living in the last hour, the time of the second appearance of Christ. The evil figs rejected Jesus as King of Judah, denying Him the throne and dominion mandate that was rightfully His. In His second appearance He is rejected again—this time, as the Prince of the tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh). In this appearance, His robe is “dipped in blood” (Rev. 19:13), even as Joseph’s coat of many colors was dipped in blood (Gen. 37:31).

In this second appearance, the conflict is not over the dominion mandate (Gen. 1:26), but over the fruitfulness mandate (Gen. 1:28). It is a question of who is the inheritor of Joseph’s birthright (1 Chron. 5:1, 2). It is a question of who has the right to be called by the birthright name of ISRAEL (Gen. 48:16).

Does the evil fig tree have the right to be called Israel, or does that name belong to Jesus Christ and to those who accept Him in His second appearance? This is the real issue that faces the Church today. Those who support the right of the evil figs to usurp the name Israel are (unwittingly) betraying Christ in His second appearance, even as Judas supported the usurpers of the throne in

Christ's first appearance.

The Literal Meaning of Antichrist

The Greek term, “antichrist,” is composed of two Greek words: anti and christos. In Matt. 2:22 we have an illustration of the meaning of *anti*. It reads,

22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of [Greek: anti] his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

The word anti means “in place of” in the sense of someone replacing another. It is more than just acting on behalf of another, such as a vice president who acts on behalf of the president during his absence. The vice president would not dare to do anything that the absent president would not do, for if he presumed to do so, then the vice president would actually be a usurper. The word *anti*, as applied in Matt. 2:22 above, means that Archelaus replaced his father Herod, who had died. If, on the other hand, Archelaus had overthrown his father Herod and then ruled Judea “in place of” his father Herod, men would say that he had usurped the throne unlawfully.

John uses the term “antichrist” in the sense that the Jewish leadership had usurped the throne of the true King, Jesus Christ. They were ruling “in place of” or *anti* Christ. Unfortunately, the common people who continued to follow and support the usurpers were implicated in this on a secondary level. Unless they repented and accepted Jesus as the King, they remained the people of antichrist. They are not necessarily “bad” people—just unrepentant in their rejection of Jesus as Messiah.

This is why John describes the antichrist in terms of those who reject the King, denying that Jesus is the Messiah that the Father had sent to rule the earth.

Judas supported the Jewish leaders and betrayed Jesus. Judas is thus called “the son of perdition” in John 17:12. Paul says in 2 Thess. 2:3, 4,

3 Let no man in any way deceive you; for it will not come unless the apostasy [apostasia, “casting away”] comes first, and the man of lawlessness [anomia] be revealed [apokalupthe, “unveiled”], the son of destruction [“perdition”], ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

Paul spoke of this event as taking place in the future. He links it to the “day of the Lord,” which, Paul says, will not take place until the “apostasy” first takes place and the unveiling of the man of lawlessness. We know from this that the “day of the Lord” had not yet occurred when Paul wrote his epistle. The “day of the Lord” was the time that the enemies of Christ would be overthrown, and Christ would be given His rightful place as Heir of all things. That is, He would be given both the dominion mandate of Judah and the fruitfulness mandate of Joseph.

But for this to take place, the usurper must be exposed, overthrown, and cast away. It is self-evident that in all this there is “apostasy.” But the word apostasia literally means “a casting away,” not a “falling away,” as if someone passively fell. The word apostasia is used again in Acts 21:21, where Paul was accused of teaching the people to “forsake” Moses. The word literally means to “cast away” Moses. In that sense, the word can refer to an apostasy FROM the law of Moses. But it literally means to cast away Moses.

So in 2 Thess. 2:3 Paul uses the term again. Something must first be cast aside before the day of the Lord can come. What is it that must be cast away? Paul seems to be saying that the “man of lawlessness” and “son of destruction” must be cast away first. The man of lawlessness is not the same as the son of destruction. The man of lawlessness seems to refer to the Jewish leaders themselves, who had usurped the throne in a lawless manner. The son of destruction is obviously a

reference to Judas (John 17:12), the disciple who betrayed Jesus by helping the men of lawlessness kill the King and usurp the throne. In Acts 2:23 Peter says in his pentecostal sermon,

23 this man [Jesus], delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless [*anomos*, “lawless”] men and put Him to death.

This same Greek word *anomos* (“lawless”) is used again in 2 Thess. 2:8, where Paul says that “*the lawless one will be revealed*” or unveiled by Christ’s coming. I do not know why the NASB (quoted above) used the term “godless” instead of lawless. Their mistranslation makes little sense. The Greek word for “godless” is *atheos*. This word is used in Eph. 2:12, where it speaks of the “gentiles” as “*having no hope and without God [atheos, “godless”] in the world.*” On the other hand, the Greek word *anomos* comes from the word *nomos*, which means law. The “a” makes it negative, “lawless.”

The fulfillment of the role of “man of lawlessness” and “son of destruction” is no longer a role played by a single individual such as Judas. In the second appearance of Christ, the role is played by a company of people. The man of lawlessness is to be thought of as a collective noun.

So Paul was drawing upon his knowledge of the events in Jerusalem surrounding Jesus’ betrayal and crucifixion when he penned the letter to the Thessalonian Church. He saw the man of lawlessness as a corporate body of evil figs led by the chief priests of the temple. Paul saw the son of destruction, or son of perdition, as Judas, the betrayer who helped them usurp the throne and the dominion mandate from Jesus, the rightful King.

Paul says that this “man of sin,” in usurping the throne of God in His temple, had replaced Jesus Christ as King. This “man of sin” then “*takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God*” (2 Thess. 2:4). Verses 7, 8 continue,

7 The mystery of lawlessness is already at work, only He [God] who now restrains [the evil figs] will do so until he is taken out of the way. 8 And then that lawless one will be revealed [“unveiled”] whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming.

Paul is saying that the evil figs who have usurped the throne of God in His temple will be exposed, revealed, or unveiled at the time of Christ’s second appearance. Is this the antichrist? Yes, of course it is, but it refers specifically to the leaders of Zionist Jewry and also to the leaders of Judaism in general, all of whom are lawless by biblical definition. These rabbinic leaders have blinded the eyes of the common Jews into supporting the revolt of Absalom against David—that is, the Jewish leaders against Jesus.

Likewise, most Christian prophecy teachers today see the rise of antichrist as really a new thing, with very little biblical precedent. They generally do not see (or choose to ignore) the story of Absalom and Ahithophel and how this was a prophetic allegory of the New Testament events. Very few understand how these things have been repeated in the twentieth century with the rise of Zionism and the “State of Israel.” For this reason, much of Church teaching has misled the people into becoming one with Judas, betraying their Friend and Master.

It is God, though, who has blinded the eyes of His people in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. Even as Israel’s eyes were blinded during the entire forty years that Moses led them in the wilderness (Deut. 29:4), so also has the “church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38) of the New Testament been blinded during its forty Jubilees of wandering under the anointing of Pentecost. None of this could have happened if God had opened the eyes of His people.

Many are expecting a “rapture” to remove the Church from the earth at the beginning, middle, or end of a seven-year tribulation. During this tribulation, they say, The Antichrist will appear as a

world leader and will set up his headquarters in a newly-rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. The concept of the “rapture” needs to be re-defined in terms of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is NOT an escape from the earth, but a transformation of the body. The overcomers who fulfill this feast will have the ability to do as Jesus did after His resurrection. They will be able to “travel” freely between heaven and earth, first teaching people on earth and then ministering to the Father in heaven.

Whether or not a single Jewish leader will emerge as the Antichrist or not, we will wait and see. It makes little difference, though. The important thing to know is that the entire evil fig tree deserves no Christian support, either financial or political. For the Scriptures to be fulfilled, the lawless ones had to usurp the dominion and fruitfulness mandates, but we ought to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and be willing, if necessary, to live with David in the wilderness, rather than in a usurped palace under Absalom.

As for the idea of the tribulation and its duration, we must reserve this topic for another time explaining the Book of Revelation. It is unfortunate that almost never is a topic complete in itself. But this much is written that you may know and not be taken by surprise when events happen in a way different from what some Christian prophecy teachers are saying.

Amen.