

WHAT CAN WE KNOW ABOUT THE ANTICHRIST?

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Who or what is this personification of evil identified in Scripture by the code number 666? Is a discussion of the Antichrist nothing more than speculation?

For those who recognize the wisdom of the Bible, the prospect of this "devil in the flesh" is a real and serious issue. Whether or not this evil one has yet been born we don't know, but the Bible says that his spirit is at work in the world right now (1 Jn. 4:3).

This booklet, written by Herb Vander Lugt, gives careful attention to what the Bible says and what it doesn't say about the coming Antichrist whose spirit is already among us. We pray that you will profit, grow, and help others through your knowledge of this enemy of Christ.

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A TIMELY SUBJECT

A few years ago, several newspapers featured a story about a man who claimed to be the Messiah. He declared that he had gone through a long series of reincarnations, and that this time around he was going to fulfill this crucial role. His spokesman said that he was waiting for just the right moment to go public. He's still waiting.

We certainly don't know when or even if this self-proclaimed messiah will reveal himself. But we who know what the Bible teaches are sure of one thing: He is not the real Messiah! He is an impostor! Jesus spoke of such people when He warned:

Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will deceive many. . . .

Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or "There!" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect (Mt. 24:4-5,23-24).

Most non-Christians are not ready to talk about an "antichrist," but many people recognize the possibility that we may soon need a world government with a strong man at the head. Some foresee the time when the whole Western world will be under a single monetary system. They point out that nations are becoming increasingly dependent on one another. They also express the fear that small countries may build nuclear weapons if they can get the necessary materials. The well-known economist/theologian Jacques Ellul, for example, has insisted

that we are rapidly approaching the time when all purchases of raw materials will be cleared through a central computer. He sees this as necessary to prevent irresponsible people from producing the kinds of weapons that would give them awesome and frightening power.

Whether we like it or not, we are headed toward increasing internationalism. Whether we like it or not, we may someday find ourselves unable to purchase certain products without having our transaction go through a giant international computer. Whether we like it or not, we may see nations banding together under one powerful leader because of their conviction that this is an absolute necessity for human survival.

All this doesn't surprise Christians who

are acquainted with the prophetic Scriptures. The Bible tells us that the time

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WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING?

Many churchgoers are intrigued by the biblical teaching about Antichrist. When we asked a number of people if they had any ideas about Antichrist, we received a wide variety of responses. Here are a few of their ideas about what they expect Antichrist to be:

A Winsome Religious Leader.

“Antichrist will probably start out as a religious TV personality. He will have a great deal of charisma and rise to power on the strength of right-wing politics and fundamental Christianity. After he achieves his position, he will show his true colors and reveal his hatred of Christ and everything He stands for.”

Someone Like Jesus.

“Antichrist will be a Jew about 30 years of age when

he begins his rise to power. He will proclaim a new religion and perform miracles like Jesus did. But unlike Jesus, he will reach for and achieve political power.”

A New-Age Advocate. “Antichrist will hold to a religion that teaches reincarnation, astral projection, communication with the dead, and a kind of pantheism that says we are all gods.”

A Homosexual. “According to the Bible, he won’t have any desire for women. So he will probably be a homosexual. The current strong emphasis on ‘gay rights’ is preparing the way for him.”

A Philosophy. “Antichrist will not be an individual, but will be a prevailing philosophy that emphasizes human freedom in moral matters and calls for toleration toward all kinds of religious ideas except true Christianity.”

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Antichrists have been present for more than 900 years. The apostle John declared that “even now many antichrists have come” (1 Jn. 2:18). He also warned against “the spirit of the Antichrist, which . . . is now already in the world” (1 Jn. 4:3).

Antichrists may be false christ, men like those Jesus warned about when He said

A Bible study that focuses on this subject is not just speculation about the future. It can be very practical, telling us how to face the antichrists and the spirit of Antichrist that is in the world today.

Revelation 13:18 assigns the number 666 to Antichrist, so we have organized our study around three sixes: (1) 6 things we know about him; (2) 6 things we don't know; and (3) 6 things we should do.

6	6	6
WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE DON'T KNOW	WHAT WE SHOULD DO

that they would come in His name, saying, “I am the Christ” (Mt. 24:5). Antichrists can also be open enemies, people who hate the gospel and refer to Jesus Christ as “a misguided zealot,” “an unsuccessful revolutionary,” or “a monumental fraud.”

The Number 666.

A time is coming when no one will be able to buy or sell unless he wears some kind of mark that includes 666 (Rev. 13:17-18).

The number 666 shows up from time to time on social security checks, credit cards, and computer

printouts. Every time it does, it excites some people. They see it as a sign that we are at the point of Christ's return. Rumors have even been spread that a huge computer in Brussels is being fed information on every living person, and that each of us will be given a number that will include the digits 666. This has resulted in an avalanche of protest letters to government and industry leaders.

"Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast" (Rev. 13:18). This admonition has been an excuse for many word games. Using the numerical equivalents of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek letters, people have made the proper names of certain infamous individuals add up to 666. For example, in Hebrew the letter K equals 100 and S equals 60. Employing all three languages if necessary,

theorists have suggested the names Nero, Caligula, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, and others. Some of the early church fathers believed that

"The Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour."
I John 2:18

the apostle John was making a veiled reference to Nero to help the church avoid needless persecution. The church fathers said that Nero would be resurrected to become the future Antichrist. But few scholars today believe that John had a proper name in mind.

Dr. John Walvoord writes: "Probably the

simplest explanation here is the best. . . . Six in the Scripture is man's number. He was to work 6 days and rest the seventh. The image of Nebuchadnezzar was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits broad. Whatever may be the deeper meaning of the number, it implies that this title referring to the first beast, Satan's masterpiece, limits him to man's level, which is far short of the deity of Jesus Christ" (*The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, Moody Press, 1966, p.210).

Dr. Leon Morris suggests: "It is possible that . . . we should understand the expression purely in the terms of the symbolism of numbers. If we take the sum of the values represented by the letters in the name *Iēsous*, the Greek name *Jesus*, it comes to 888. Each digit is one more than seven, the perfect number. But 666 yields the opposite phenomenon, for each digit

falls short. The number may be meant to indicate not an individual, but a persistent falling short. All the more is this likely to be correct if we translated 'it is the number of man' rather than 'a man.' John will then be saying that unregenerate man is persistently evil. He bears the mark of the beast in all that he does. Civilization without Christ is necessarily under the dominion of the evil one" (*Revelation Of St. John*, Eerdmans, first edition 1969, p.174).

We can't be sure about the exact meaning of the number. But we can be reasonably certain that it has something to do with the devil and his two cohorts, the Beast and the False Prophet. All three members of this "infernal trinity" come short of the perfection of God. They are finite and limited. This satanic trinity is a cheap imitation!

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WHAT
WE KNOWWHAT WE
DON'T KNOWWHAT WE
SHOULD DO

1A. His Times

1B. The Exact Date

1C. Be Ready

1A. WHAT WE KNOW: HIS TIMES

Antichrist may be living today! But he probably won't come forward openly as a Christ-hating world dictator until after Jesus has caught up Christians from the earth to be with Him in heaven. This event, described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and usually called the rapture, could occur at any moment.

Suddenly, without an advance announcement, Christians will hear a trumpet blast heralding Christ's coming for His own. At that instant, believers who have died will be clothed with their new bodies, and living saints will be transformed. Then both will be caught up, removed from the earth.

This dramatic event will

probably cause a great deal of chaos and lead many to believe in Jesus Christ. But it will also make multitudes ready to give their unconditional allegiance to a dynamic earthly leader. Paul connected the rapture to the Antichrist, saying that it will remove the one hindrance to the full outbreak of evil and open the door for Antichrist's manifestation to the world. To Christians concerned that they had already entered the great tribulation, he wrote:

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, 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. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed (2 Th. 2:3-8).

Notice the words, “He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.” Most efforts to identify this restrainer have been unsatisfactory. One Bible commentator admitted, “The Christians in Thessalonica knew, but we don’t.” The passage makes good sense, however, if we view the restrainer as the Holy Spirit working through the church. Through believers, the “salt

of the earth,” He has been restraining the “mystery of iniquity.” As soon as the church is removed in the rapture, the way will be open for Antichrist to come to power.

“He was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.”
Revelation 13:5

Antichrist’s coming could be close at hand because the rapture is an any-moment possibility. Jesus said that the church of every generation should be living in continual expectancy because “the Son of Man is coming at an hour you

do not expect” (Mt. 24:44). Antichrist will reveal himself very soon after the rapture.

I.B. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW: THE EXACT DATE

While we know that the Antichrist will be revealed shortly after the church is removed from the earth in the rapture, we have no way of giving these endtime events a date.

I.C. WHAT WE SHOULD DO: BE READY

Being ready for the rapture is the best way we can oppose and overcome present-day antichrists and the spirit of Antichrist. Jesus issued the exhortation, “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Lk. 12:40). The apostle John wrote, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we

shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 Jn. 3:2-3).

A person who wants to be ready for the Lord's return will try to live a pure life. He won't want to do anything he would be ashamed of if Christ were to return. He wouldn't want to be thinking the kind of thoughts he would be ashamed of if he were to be raptured while thinking them.

When we live in continual readiness for the rapture, we will automatically recognize impostors and the enemies of Jesus Christ. That's the promise of 1 John 2:18-3:3. A believer who is living a pure life and keeping in touch with God through prayer and regular study of the Bible possesses an anointing from the Holy Spirit that will keep him from being deceived by antichrists or captured by the spirit of Antichrist.

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WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE DON'T KNOW	WHAT WE SHOULD DO
1A. His Times	1B. The Exact Date	1C. Be Ready
2A. His Character	2B. His Identity	2C. Be Discerning

2A. WHAT WE KNOW: HIS CHARACTER

The man called Antichrist in the Bible will at first appear to be a friend of Israel and the world's savior. Eventually, however, he will openly reveal his deep hatred for Christ and His people. This hostility will be his most pronounced trait. In the matter of character, he will be deceitful, blasphemous, satanic, hateful and cruel, immoral, and idolatrous.

A Dynamic Deceiver. Antichrist will seem to be a man of peace when he first appears. In Revelation 6:2 he is portrayed as riding on a white horse, wearing a crown, holding a bow

without arrows, and achieving great success. He will be hailed as a great emancipator (Rev. 13:3-4). He will be so clever that the nation of Israel will be deceived by him. Jesus warned, "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive" (Jn. 5:43).

An Arrogant Blasphemer. As soon as Antichrist dares to show his true colors, he will become an open, bold blasphemer. We read, "Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods He shall regard neither the God [or

gods] of his fathers . . . nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all” (Dan. 11:36-37).

Paul described him as “the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God [or ‘a god’] in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Th. 2:3-4).

The apostle John said that he will have “a blasphemous name” (Rev. 13:1) and that he will open “his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven” (13:6).

A Diabolical Satanist. This coming Antichrist will be empowered by Satan and will make him an object of worship. Paul declared that Antichrist’s coming will be “according to the working of Satan, with . . . lying wonders” (2 Th. 2:9).

Satan will perform a

miracle on this coming Antichrist that will have a tremendous impact on mankind. John said that he saw “one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded,

“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception.”

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

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” (Rev. 13:3-4). The beast will come back to life after being declared dead.

A little later, the second beast (Rev. 13:11-18) will call fire down from heaven and animate an image of the first beast. These miracles will serve a diabolical purpose. They will deceive people into rejecting God and worshiping Satan and Antichrist the way we worship the Father and Jesus.

Unspeakably Hateful And Cruel. This future world ruler will reveal his hatred and cruelty in the way he makes war with believers (Rev. 13:7,10). The extent of his hatred and cruelty is indicated by the fact that the great multitude “which no one could number” is identified as martyrs who came out of “the great tribulation” (Rev. 7:9,14). The number executed under his persecution will probably exceed the combined totals killed by the Nazis and the communists during the 20th century. And all of this

savagery will be rooted in his hatred for Christ!

Grossly Immoral.

Antichrist will reject all the moral standards held by religious people down through the ages. His title is literally “man of lawlessness” (2 Th. 2:3 NIV). His disdain for all the religions of history is indicated in the words, “He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers” (Dan. 11:37 NIV). He will reject everything good in every historical religious system. He will show his hatred for Christ by rebelling against all moral standards.

Another indication of this man’s immorality may be implied in the statement that he will have no regard for “the desire of women” (Dan. 11:37). In ancient days this expression might have referred to the god Tammus or Adonis, two names for a god who held special appeal to women. But since it is unlikely that mankind will

go back to worshipping the pantheon of Babylonian and Greek gods, these words probably mean that he will express his disdain for “the desire of women” to marry and have children. If so, he may openly advocate homosexuality. This would certainly be an obvious way of showing his enmity toward Jesus Christ.

A Power-Obsessed Idolater. Although Antichrist will contemptuously mock all the religions of history and boldly declare himself to be God, he will privately bring costly gifts in honor of “a god of fortresses” and will carry out his military campaigns with “a foreign god” (Dan. 11:38-39). This may mean that he will be so power-obsessed that he will lavish wealth on his war machine in a manner reminiscent of the way pagans honored their gods. Some scholars go a step further and say that he

will border on insanity by actually worshipping his own war machine. In either case, power will be his idol.

In summary, Antichrist’s primary characteristic will be his antagonism toward Jesus Christ. He will be hateful, cruel, lawless, and idolatrous. But he will cleverly mask his true self until it suits his purposes to be open in his hostility toward Christ.

2B. WHAT WE DON’T KNOW: HIS IDENTITY

Although we know what kind of man the Antichrist will be, there is no way of knowing who he is prior to his coming to power. If he is in the world today, his identity cannot be determined. All efforts to identify him through the numerical equivalents of the number 666 are futile.

2C. WHAT WE SHOULD DO: BE DISCERNING

Knowing what kind of man Antichrist will be can help us to be discerning about the religious phenomena of our day. We will be able to identify current “antichrists” and “the spirit of the Antichrist” (1 Jn. 2:18; 4:3).

refers to as “the man of lawlessness.”

In summary, we cannot identify Antichrist, but we can certainly detect antichrists and the spirit of Antichrist whenever we encounter them.

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WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE DON'T KNOW	WHAT WE SHOULD DO
1A. His Times	1B. The Exact Date	1C. Be Ready
2A. His Character	2B. His Identity	2C. Be Discerning
3A. His Strategy	3B. His Nation or Race	3C. Be Cautious

A public figure who denies Christ’s deity, His substitutionary atonement, or His bodily resurrection represents the spirit of Antichrist. People who claim that they have a messianic role are antichrists, even though they may say many positive things about the Lord Jesus Christ of history. Furthermore, people who mock absolute moral standards represent the spirit of the one the Bible

3A. WHAT WE KNOW: HIS STRATEGY

Antichrist will gain his position through deception. He will play the role of a wise leader as he climbs his way to the top of the political ladder. He will portray himself as a man of peace and a friend of Israel but turn out to be neither.

A Man Of Peace. The fact that he will appear as a man of peace is indicated in

Revelation 6, where he is portrayed as riding on a white horse, carrying a bow without arrows, wearing a victor's crown, and achieving one success after another (vv.1-2). This is a picture of peaceful conquest, likely through international alliances. Multitudes will see him as their redeemer and look on Satan as their god. Revelation 13:4 reads, "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?'"

This peace image will soon be shattered, however. The white horse is followed by a red one, a symbol of revolution and bloodshed (Rev. 6:3-4).

A Friend Of Israel.

Antichrist will make a treaty with Israel that will apparently give her people a sense of security. But at the midpoint of this 7-year treaty

he will suddenly turn against the Israelites. He will halt their sacrifices and begin to desolate Jerusalem (see Dan. 9:27; Mt. 24:15-22).

3B. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW: HIS NATION OR RACE

Although we know what his strategy will be, we cannot know his national origin nor his racial identity. Efforts have been made to find a biblical basis for making him Jewish, Syrian, or a descendant of Ham, but all such speculation is futile.

3C. WHAT WE SHOULD DO: BE CAUTIOUS

Since Antichrist's strategy will be deception, we should be very cautious about whom we follow. Not everyone who claims to be a man of peace can be trusted. A person may pose as a friend of Israel in public statements and yet be thinking of ways to destroy her.

The world is full of deceivers today. A few years ago a religious man, who at times referred to himself as a pacifist, received high honors as a man of peace—even though he had encouraged some people in his country to take violent action against the government. Religious people may make eloquent appeals to the Western nations about a reduction of weapons, while at the same time they're espousing the cause of communism. Many religionists lend their support to civil rights activists in the

AIDS. Interestingly, while they cry out for the rights of those who promote lawlessness, they seek to outlaw Christian schools and do all they can to limit the freedom of evangelicals to preach the gospel. They talk about belief in God but promote principles that give liberty to sin. They are deceptive antichrists.

It follows that we should be cautious and not support any religious or political organization until we know what it teaches and whom it represents.

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3A. His Strategy	3B. His Nation or Race	3C. Be Cautious
4A. His Cohorts	4B. Their Names	4C. Be Light

name of freedom, but they will fight against right-to-life laws, anti-porn legislation, or mandatory testing to prevent drug abuse or the spread of

4A. WHAT WE KNOW: HIS COHORTS

The Scriptures portray Antichrist, the beast of

Revelation 13:1-10, in close association with the dragon of Revelation 12, the “beast coming up out of the earth” (Rev. 13:11-18), and “the great harlot who sits on many waters” (Rev. 17:1).

Satan. Antichrist will receive his position of worldwide authority through the dragon, who is Satan (Rev. 12:9). The devil will give Antichrist “his power, his throne, and great authority” (Rev. 13:2). Through Antichrist, he will receive worship (Rev. 13:4), just as the Father receives worship through the Son (Jn. 5:19-27).

The devil will perform a tremendous miracle by bringing Antichrist back to life from apparent death. We read, “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” (Rev. 13:3).

The Antichrist is the seventh head of the beast in Revelation 13, and both the seventh and eighth king in Revelation 17:11. Furthermore, he is pictured as coming up out of the abyss (Rev. 11:7; 17:8). It is possible that he will be killed while seeking his

“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.”

Revelation 13:3

position as world leader, be resurrected by Satan, and become the source of wonder to mankind.

The False Prophet.

The second accomplice of Antichrist will be the beast

portrayed in Revelation 13:11-18. He is called “the false prophet” (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Just as the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, the false prophet will honor Antichrist. He will perform miracles and signs. His climactic miracle will be that of giving life to an image of Antichrist. This will induce many to worship Antichrist. For those who do not join in this adoration, the false prophet will bring death by execution or slow starvation. He will take control so that no one will be able to buy or sell without a mark indicating loyalty to Antichrist.

The Harlot. The third cohort of Antichrist will be the harlot of Revelation 17. She is pictured as riding on a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads are declared to be seven mountains (v.9), probably the city of Rome. The seven heads are also

seven kings or kingdoms (v.10). The five fallen ones are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. The sixth is the Roman Empire of New Testament days. The seventh will be the future restored empire under Antichrist. The eighth may be his kingdom after he is killed and resurrected by the devil. The ten horns will be a federation of Western nations organized by Antichrist during the time of his rise to power.

The harlot of Revelation 17 will be a religious system that probably will have its headquarters in Rome, the city of seven hills. She is identified as “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev. 17:5). This title is significant. It was in ancient Babylon that the fertility cult religious system was developed. It spread to Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome. In all of

these cultures, it promoted the same set of gods and goddesses under different names. It always had room for more gods. It was popular because it sanctioned and promoted immorality, tolerated a wide variety of beliefs, and produced seemingly supernatural experiences.

The harlot of the endtimes will bring together into one system a merger of occultism, eastern mysticism, pantheism, reincarnation, nature worship, and the like. It probably will tolerate everything except biblical Christianity.

The heads of this ecumenical religion will work closely with Antichrist as he rises to power. But they will not fare very well after Antichrist achieves world power. They will be destroyed by the very ones they helped (Rev. 17:16).

In summary, the dragon (Satan), the beast

(Antichrist), and the false prophet will be an unholy trinity. They will imitate the relationship that exists between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They will accept the cooperation and help of an ecumenical religious system in exchange for favors. But once they achieve absolute power, they will destroy the false church so that they will have complete freedom to establish their own anti-god regime.

4B. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW: THEIR NAMES

We know the name of the first cohort of Antichrist. He is Satan. But we cannot attach a name to the false prophet. In this respect we are under the same limitations that we are when we try to identify Antichrist. Furthermore, we cannot point to any religious group and say that it will become the harlot of Revelation 17.

4C. WHAT WE SHOULD DO: BE LIGHT

While it is both foolish and futile to identify the coming false prophet or harlot, we can oppose them by being light-bearers. Light in the Bible represents both truth and goodness. Jesus said of believers, “You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:14,16). Paul wrote, “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8). By shining the light of truth and godliness, we reflect the triune God, who is perfect in love and holiness.

God our Father is “the Holy One” (Isa. 1:4; 5:19,24; 10:20; 12:6). The devil is “the evil one” (Mt. 6:13). God cannot lie (Num. 23:19; Heb. 6:18). Satan is “a liar, and the father of it” (Jn. 8:42-44).

Jesus Christ brought to mankind the fullness of grace and truth (Jn. 1:17). He loved His enemies so much that He laid down His life in the terrible death of Calvary to pay the price for their sins. He was so pure that no one could accuse Him of sin. Antichrist, on

By walking as children of light, we can restrain the forces of evil that represent the spirit of Antichrist.

the other hand, will be the very antithesis of graciousness, truth, and love. He will be “the man of lawlessness”—cruel, deceitful, and hateful.

The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life (Eph. 2:1-4) and transformation (2 Cor. 3:1-18). In those who yield to

“revived Roman Empire.” The books of Daniel and Revelation give us this information.

According To Daniel 2. This chapter relates the story of a king’s dream and a prophet’s explanation of it. About 600 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonian Empire, had a dream in which he saw a huge image. While he was looking at it, he saw a rock—mysteriously cut out of a mountain—roll down the slope, strike the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and smash it to bits.

From what Daniel told the king, and from what history tells us, we know that the head of gold represented Babylon, and that the other sections of the image represented Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Rome, the iron part of the image, gradually deteriorated and divided into two sections.

Historically, the western part lasted until AD 476, the eastern part until about 1450.

In the dream, however, the Roman Empire is suddenly

This prophecy cannot be literally fulfilled unless the Roman Empire is in place again at the time when Christ returns to the earth.

destroyed. Therefore, this prophecy cannot be literally fulfilled unless the Roman Empire is in place again at the time when Christ returns to the earth.

This raises some questions. Does this mean that the restored Roman Empire will have the same boundaries that it had in the

past? Not necessarily. The geographical limits of empires change. Their capital cities may even change, as happened in the British Empire when London replaced Winchester as the capital during the 13th century. The Roman Empire is equivalent to what we usually call the Western

“The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. . . . And all the world marveled and followed the beast.”

Revelation 13:2-3

world—those nations that have kept *Corpus Juris Civilis* (the body of Roman law) as the basis of their jurisprudence. We usually think of everything from the

Middle East northward, all of Western Europe, and everything in the Americas as the Western world.

According To Revelation 13. The beast of Revelation 13 has ten horns and seven heads. We have already noted that the seven heads represent a succession of great empires. The ten horns, as indicated earlier, represent ten nations that will make up Antichrist's empire. The lion, bear, and leopard in Revelation 13, as in Daniel 7, represent the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek empires. This vision suggests that Antichrist's final empire will combine the strongest elements of all these ancient kingdoms.

5B. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW: THE ACTUAL NATIONS

Some people are certain that the European Common Market is a forerunner of

Antichrist's kingdom. While it's possible, no one can really know. The number in the Common Market changes from time to time. Furthermore, the ten nations that will be confederates of Antichrist will probably include some from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Americas.

We can't even be sure about the capital city of this coming empire. It may be Rome, Babylon, or a brand-new city. Therefore, all speculation about the exact boundaries of Antichrist's empire, the names of the nations that will compose it, or the identity of the capital are quite useless.

5C. WHAT WE SHOULD DO: BE INFORMED

An intelligent awareness of present-day trends toward internationalization will help us fulfill our role as Christian citizens. It will also heighten our anticipation of

Christ's second coming. Of course, not all internationalization is necessarily evil. Free trade lifts the standard of living in many countries. Regulation of materials used to produce nuclear power may become an absolute necessity. But efforts to bring together all people into a secular humanistic view of life by controlling education of children must be opposed.

The fact that we are moving rapidly toward a united world may be an indication that the time of Antichrist is near. With present-day technology, a world ruler could quite easily control all buying and selling. These facts should not alarm us, however. Rather, they should heighten our anticipation of the Lord's return.

6**6****6**

WHAT WE KNOW	WHAT WE DON'T KNOW	WHAT WE SHOULD DO
1A. His Times	1B. The Exact Date	1C. Be Ready
2A. His Character	2B. His Identity	2C. Be Discerning
3A. His Strategy	3B. His Nation or Race	3C. Be Cautious
4A. His Cohorts	4B. Their Names	4C. Be Light
5A. His Domain	5B. The Actual Nations	5C. Be Informed
6A. His Defeat	6B. The Details of War	6C. Be Confident

6A. WHAT WE KNOW: HIS DEFEAT

Antichrist will rule for only a brief time. Then he will be thoroughly defeated. After he breaks his pact with Israel, he will have only 3½ years left (Dan. 9:24-27). Daniel 11:40-45 indicates that before the 3½ years have expired he will face rebellion—one by the “king of the South” and the other by the “king of the North.” He will defeat them, sweep through the Middle East, wreak havoc with the Jewish people, hear troubling news from the east and north, and become involved in the battle that will bring about

his total destruction.

Zechariah 14 gives us some additional facts of Antichrist’s waterloo. His forces will meet their doom while they are pillaging Jerusalem. When the Lord returns to the Mount of Olives, the topography of Israel will suddenly be changed. Frightful plagues will strike the enemy. Godly Israelites will join the armies from heaven in attacking their foes. And the Lord Jesus will bring order out of the chaos.

Revelation tells us that the Euphrates River will be dried up so that “the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” (16:12). Unclean

spirits sent by the “infernally trinity” will deceive rulers of nations to gather their armies at the Valley of Megiddo to fight a climactic battle against God (16:13-16). Commercial Babylon will be supernaturally destroyed (ch. 18). And Christ will come down as Leader of the armies of heaven, destroy the enemies, and cast the beast and false prophet into the lake of fire (19:11-21).

6B. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW: THE DETAILS OF WAR

While Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation show Antichrist and his army being thoroughly defeated at Christ's return, they don't put all the pieces together. We can't name the nations that make up the southern and northern alliances in Daniel 11. We can't identify the “kings from the east” (Rev. 16:12). And we can't present a detailed chronology of the

War of Armageddon. Many of the details, like those involved in Christ's first coming, will become clear as they are fulfilled.

6C. WHAT WE SHOULD DO: BE CONFIDENT

While we cannot put everything in place, we can read these prophecies with the confidence that God and His people will triumph! Everything earthly is going to perish, but we who believe are citizens of a world that will last forever. Let's be sure that we give the right answer to Peter's probing question, “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?” (2 Pet. 3:11-12).

WHY STUDY PROPHECY?

After a person has studied the prophecies of the Bible, what has he really gained? What practical value can be derived from information about the future Antichrist?

These questions are worth considering. The fact of the matter is that some people who specialize in Bible prophecy show little real devotion to Christ and rarely try to lead anyone to the Lord Jesus. Their minds are full of information but their hearts are empty. They aren't gaining anything of spiritual value from their searching of the Scriptures. But it needn't be that way. God would not have included so much prophetic information in the Scriptures if He didn't want us to study it and teach it.

I grew up in a

denomination that interpreted prophecy from an amillennial position. In other words, my pastors taught that there will be no future reestablishment of Israel as God's special people, and that the Old Testament prophecies of a golden age—passages like Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:1-16; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Ezekiel 36:1-38—will never be fulfilled because of Israel's rejection of Christ when He came. As a result, many chapters in the Bible were meaningless to me.

I felt uneasy about this. I also found myself arguing with a lay mission worker when he said, "Our pastor sneers at the idea that the nation of Israel has a future, but I keep finding Bible passages indicating that Israel will be regathered and converted." A few years later, while I was reading Ezekiel 36, I saw something I had never seen before. In

this passage, God reiterated His promises of Israel's restoration and declared, "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went" (Ezek. 36:22). This destroyed my idea that Israel, through her sin and unbelief, had forfeited these promised blessings.

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I started a more careful reading of the Old Testament prophets and began to see that God

certainly does have an earthly program for Israel. I also saw that Israel and the church are distinct entities. Before long, the prophecies of the Old Testament began to come alive. The Word of God became more vital and real to me. As a result, I grew spiritually. I became more conscious of the promise that Jesus is coming again. My conduct improved and my desire to win others to Christ grew!

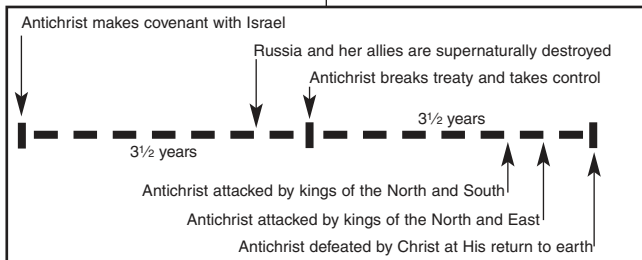
The study of Bible prophecy can be just a mental exercise—but so can a study of the attributes of God or any other aspect of Bible doctrine. The secret for success is our relationship with God. If we love the Lord, view the Scriptures as His message to us, and desire above all else to know Him more intimately and serve Him more perfectly, we *will* grow through the study of prophecy.

DANIEL'S SEVENTIETH WEEK

The time-frame for endtime chronology is found in Daniel 9:24-27, the passage that describes Israel's "seventy weeks." These "weeks" are clearly 7-year periods. The "seventy weeks," therefore, are 490 years. The first 69 "weeks" (483 years) take us from the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 BC (Neh. 2:5-6) until the "cutting off" of the Messiah (Dan. 9:26). This is, by almost universal consent, a reference to Christ's crucifixion. The Romans under Titus

fulfilled the rest of verse 26 by destroying Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70.

In this passage we encounter the Antichrist—the one called "the prince who is to come." He will "confirm a covenant with many [Daniel's people, the Jews (v.24)] for one week [7 years]." This is the "seventieth week," the time when God will resume His special dealing with Israel. Antichrist, in keeping with his character, will break his treaty after 3½ years ("the middle of the week" [v.27]) and instigate a reign of terror that will desolate the city of Jerusalem. But he will meet his doom when Christ returns to earth.

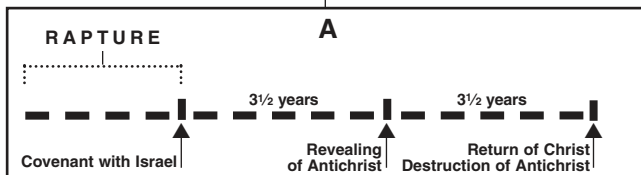


ANTICHRIST AND THE CHURCH

Bible students who believe that Jesus Christ could return at any moment to remove believers from the earth (the rapture of the church) are convinced that this will occur before Antichrist

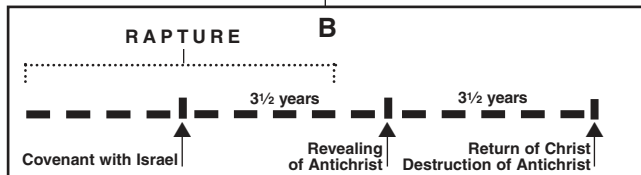
prophet's people (the Jews) and his city (Jerusalem), not to the church.

Some imminent-return Bible teachers, though agreeing that diagram A is probably correct, say that the rapture could conceivably occur at some point during the first half of the seventieth week. They point out that



begins his reign of terror. And most of them also believe that the rapture will occur at least 3½ years before Antichrist's rule. This belief is based on Daniel 9:24, which says that the seventy weeks relate to the

Paul assures us only that we will be “taken out of the way” before Antichrist reveals his true identity and initiates his program of persecution (2 Th. 2:1-12). They would see the rapture of the church like diagram B.



ARE YOU READY?

Almost 2,000 years have elapsed since two angels told the apostles that Jesus, who had just disappeared behind a cloud, would return in the same way they had seen Him go. Two thousand years is a long time! Generation after generation has looked for His second coming. Unbelievers scoff, and many Christians tend to become complacent. The few who do get excited about Bible prophecy often make blunders that discredit them.

But the prophetic clock keeps ticking. And one of these days, suddenly and unexpectedly, the sound of a heavenly trumpet and a cry of triumph will pierce the air. Then the rapture, the resurrection, and the judgment seat of Christ will occur. But for the unsaved, there will be the revealing of

Antichrist, the terrors of the great tribulation, and the devastation of the War of Armageddon.

Are you ready? If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you have no reason to fear an eternal hell. But if you are living a disobedient life, you will be ashamed and apprehensive when He returns for you.

If you have never acknowledged your sin and placed your trust in Jesus Christ, you will enter the darkest period in all of history. And it's likely that you will become a follower of Antichrist. Second Thessalonians 2:12 tells us that people who heard the truth and rejected it before the rapture of the church are likely to be deluded and destroyed. Receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. And do it today before it's too late!

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