

The Antichrist

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Abstract: Structures are now created and ideologies propagated to pave the way for the coming of the Antichrist as world leader. It is imperative to understand these reforms if we are to effectively expose and resist them on biblical grounds.

"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 worshipped, 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, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. "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 among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2TH 2:3-12).

The Antichrist is an end-time world-leader who will make his appearance after the dispensation of the church. He will emerge from the kingdom of darkness to rule on earth for seven years during the coming tribulation period. His revelation will be preceded by the rapture of the church, when those who restrain him and his kingdom will be taken away from planet earth. The end of his dictatorship of seven years will suddenly come when Jesus Christ appear in glory on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem to crush the powers of evil.

That the Antichrist will only be revealed after the church dispensation does not imply that it isn't necessary for us to make a study of this great adversary of Christ and His kingdom. Throughout the entire church dispensation a fierce struggle was waged between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. Satan's final objective with the struggle is to gain control over all people and to establish the Antichrist as king and universal messiah on earth.

The fact that neither Christ nor the Antichrist are physically present on earth, doesn't mean that the struggle between them is less real. All attacks against Christ and His kingdom are instigated by a demonic, antichristian spirit. That is the mystery of lawlessness which is already at work. Political and religious leaders who were notorious for the persecution of Christians during the church dispensation all showed themselves to be antichrists. They are forerunners who prepared the way for the coming of the great end-time dictator. John said: "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" (1 Jn. 2:18).

The march of the Antichrist to ultimate world domination can, therefore, be traced back to the actions of all rebels against God and His kingdom. They were moved by the spirit of rebellion. However, as a physically revealed world leader the Antichrist is strictly confined to the end-time. There is no credibility in the historicist view that Nero, Hitler, or any other historical figure fulfilled all prophecies with regard to the Antichrist. The Bible is very clear on the fact that the true Christ will consume the Antichrist with the breath of His mouth and destroy him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8).

We should also note that the Antichrist will definitely be a *person* and not an impersonal *system*. He is called *the man of sin*, also *the son of perdition*, and *the opposer* who *sits* in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. In Revelation 19:20 it is confirmed that he will be a living person on earth on the day of the Second Coming of Jesus. He will, of course, have an ideology and a system of government, but as a living person he will be the head of the system. The Antichrist and the false prophet will form a two-man government in which they will establish Satan's authority on earth and act in terms of his wishes: "And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority" (Rev. 13:2).

Revelation of the Antichrist

According to the symbolism of the four horsemen of Revelation 6:1-8, the Antichrist will be revealed in a highly deceptive way as an *angel of light* in an effort to first mislead people, and later to extend his merciless dictatorship over them. In the first stage of his rule he will appear to the world as a global peacemaker who brings hope and new opportunities of survival to a conflict-ridden and poverty-stricken world (*the rider on the white horse*). In a show of clever diplomacy he will deceive the people into accepting a new world order under a one world government which will operate in close association with an alliance of religions in order to accomplish international unity.

When his peace initiatives and reform policy of peace and unity collapse after 3½ years, the Antichrist will turn to violence in order to enforce his authority on all mankind. He will then become a cruel military dictator (*the rider on the red horse*). The next logical action will be stringent economical control and the rationing of food during the severe wars and famine in the world (*the rider on the black horse*). After these calamities, the only activity left for the Antichrist is his ride as the angel of death to reap as many souls as possible to join him in perdition (*the rider on the pale horse*).

In His prophetic discourse, Jesus described a similar sequence of events that will occur during the coming tribulation period (Mt. 24:4-9):

- "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many" (*the white horse*);
- "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars:.... For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (*the red horse*);
- "...and there shall be famines, and pestilences" (*the black horse*);

- "Then they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you" (*the pale horse*).

Identity of the Antichrist

In Revelation 13 more details are given about the identity and character of this evil world leader. He is described as *the beast with seven heads and ten horns*: "And I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as *the feet* of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion" (Rev. 13:1-2)

The Antichrist is so closely identified with the previous world empires that he is depicted with the body of a leopard, the paws of a bear, the mouth of a lion and with ten horns on his head (Rev. 13:2). These symbols correspond with those in Daniel 7 where the Babylonian empire is represented as a lion, the Medo-Persian empire as a bear, the Greek empire as a leopard and the Roman empire as a ferocious beast with ten horns on its head:

- The Antichrist will follow the tradition of the Babylonians who deified their kings. He will declare himself above all that is god and even challenge the authority of the God of heaven. He will cause an image of himself to be erected in the temple and force all the citizens of his global empire to worship the image. Those who refuse will be executed. He will also make relentless attacks on the Jewish state after they have abrogated their covenant with him, and try to annihilate all of them.
- As in the Medo-Persian Empire, he will trample upon all the nations, make an end to their independence and incorporate them into his own empire. He will establish a merciless government and rule over his kingdom with the irrevocable and unchangeable laws of the Medes and the Persians. He will also order the destruction of the Jewish people.
- The Greek Empire was depicted by Daniel as a leopard with four wings. It operated highly mobile armies characterised by skilful military manoeuvres that enabled them to carry out their attacks with speed and efficiency. The Antichrist will revive these tactics in his well-disciplined armies. He will be able to deploy striking forces practically overnight in any part of the world. An anti-Jewish policy also ruled supreme in the Syrian province of this empire. The Greek dictator, Antiochus Epiphanes, was a fanatical hater of the Jews and as such also a type of the Antichrist.
- The fourth beast with its ten horns and teeth of iron had a terrible appearance. This is symbolic of the harshness, unapproachability and unrelenting attitudes by which the Roman Empire made its authority and sovereignty felt. During the invasion of Israel and the siege of the city of Jerusalem, hundreds of thousands of Jews were gruesomely murdered, crucified on trees and sold as slaves, while many of the survivors were taken as captives of war to other parts of the empire. An even more devastating war of annihilation will be waged by the Antichrist during the great tribulation.

It is evident that the empire of the Antichrist won't only be a revival of the Roman Empire, but of all the great world empires. It will have particularly strong Babylonian features. For this reason it is wrong to regard Western Europe as the revived Roman Empire and to allege that the Antichrist must come from Rome. His origin will be from a country that formed part of all the previous world empires, viz. the land of *the king of the north* (Dan. 11:36-45). This land lies to the north-east of Israel and was during various times in history referred to as Babylonia, Assyria, and Syria. It is presently known as Syria and Iraq, but its heartland is in Iraq. That is also where the city of Babylon is situated, which is now being rebuilt. The book of Daniel is of great help to determine the Antichrist's country of origin:

- He is initially depicted as one out of ten (Dan. 7:7-8), being one of the ten countries of the old Roman Empire. The Syrian province, which included the present Iraq, was part of this empire.
- In a following scenario his country of origin is indicated as one out of four, being the four provinces of the divided Greek Empire (Dan. 8:8-9). Syria (including the present Iraq) was one of these provinces.
- He is finally identified as one out of two, i.e. the countries of *the king of the north* and *the king of the south* in the divided Greek Empire after Alexander the Great (Dan. 11). The historical battle between these two kingdoms is described in Daniel 11:1-35, while the end-time king of the north, the Antichrist, is described in Daniel 11:36-45. It can thus be concluded that he will originate from Syria or Iraq.

In Isaiah is another important prophecy on the revival of the ancient Assyrian Empire in the end-time. It is discussed within the context of *the day of the Lord* (Is. 10:20) and the Antichrist is described as *the king of Assyria*: "Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* when the Lord has performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he says, By the strength of my hand I have done *it*, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the boundaries of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man" (Is. 10:12-13).

The Antichrist will, without any trouble, remove the boundaries between the nations to internationalise them. He will also appropriate their treasures and gain control over the world economy. The blind and deceived political leaders of that time will give their full co-operation to him: "And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast" (Rev. 17:12-13).

In Revelation 13:11-18 the false prophet is described, who will be a close ally of the Antichrist. He will deceive the people of the world through signs and wonders to worship the Antichrist and to receive his number on their right-hand and forehead.

Power bases of the Antichrist

During the first 3½ years of the tribulation period the Antichrist will reign as prince of peace and pursue world unity. Then he will make his big move to gain absolute power. The Antichrist's change of image and strategy in the middle of the tribulation will be so dramatic and terrifying that he will endeavour to force all people into satanism. After he has received a deadly wound and came to life again, the devil will no longer manifest through him as a prince of peace and an angel of light.

He will now reveal his true nature as a power-hungry dictator who will give full expression of his propensity for blasphemy, sadism and brutal murder. He will establish a dictatorship that will be power-based on politics, religion and the control of economic resources. On each of these spheres, totalitarian control will be exercised with the main objective to reduce all people to absolute slavery. They won't be granted political rights, religious liberties or economic freedom outside the unitary structures of the new world order. The three power bases are:

Political power

In the political sphere he will be the sole ruler of the world during the last 3½ years, and base his power on military strength. No alliance will be able to match him because "power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Rev. 13:7). There won't be a single nation with a sovereign government, as all of them will be subjected to the decrees of the Antichrist's military regime. Political disloyalty won't be tolerated and rulers who don't subject themselves to his absolute authority will be pulled down from their thrones (Is. 10:13).

The Antichrist will be a modern Nebuchadnezzar who will order the world citizens of his empire at will. The brutality of historical world dictators such as Nimrod, Alexander the Great, Nero, Hitler, and Stalin will be repeated in his reign in a surpassing way. His military campaigns will not only be directed at earthly targets as the greatest military deployment in the history of mankind will occur in Israel against a heavenly army (Rev. 19:19). That will give rise to the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14, 16).

Religious power

After the false peace has expired and the last 3½ years of the great tribulation take effect, it will also spiritually be the darkest time in world history. The satanic triumvirate of the dragon (Satan), the beast (Antichrist), and the false prophet will then assume dictatorial powers on earth. They will make concerted efforts to crush the power of the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, by destroying all people who worship the God of heaven. The Antichrist will claim the position of God for himself on behalf of the devil, and will be assisted by the false prophet: "...the falling away [will come] 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 worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thes. 2:3-4).

Daniel also warned against this end-time god-man who will arrogantly exalt himself to be God to the deceived masses of his world empire: "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... Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers... But in His [place] shall he honour the God of forces" (Dan. 11:36-38).

The Antichrist will exalt himself to the position of God. But his fraud will be evident because he will still recognise a power higher than himself – that is Satan who is the God of forces. Satan teaches his followers to wage war and capture fortresses and strongholds, and thus to achieve their political and religious objectives by force.

Revelation 13:3-4 clearly confirms the rise to religious power by the Antichrist, and that all the deceived people in the world will worship him. John says: "And all the world marvelled and followed the beast. So they worshipped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and the worshipped the beast, saying: 'Who is like the beast?... And 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'" (Rev. 13:3-4, 8). Through the mediation of the false prophet, who will do great signs and wonders to deceive the masses, an image of the beast will be erected in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and it will be compulsory to worship the image (Rev. 13:15).

Such an absolute form of religious slavery will necessitate the disbanding and destroying of the alliance of false religions that will be formed during the first part of the tribulation period under the auspices of the Antichrist as universal messiah (Rev. 17:16). Only then will it be possible to force all people to worship the beast as God.

Economic power

Besides the political and religious macrostructures, a cashless world economy under the control of the Antichrist will be instituted. With the use of numbers and codes, he will control a computerised system of funds transfer from a central part of the world (Rev. 13:16-18).

From this scripture it is obvious that numbers or codes will be allocated to people, without which no one will be able to buy or sell. Cash will be withdrawn from circulation. The system of electronic funds transfer will only be accessible to people who have "the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:17).

The condition to obtain this number or code is that an oath of allegiance will have to be made to the universal messiah and his world government. Only then will a personal identity number (PIN) be issued. However, a transaction of this nature will involve the selling of your soul to Satan for temporary economic gain. By signing the oath of allegiance the Antichrist will be recognised as the sole political, religious and economic head of the new world order.

Many theologians allege that there will never be any spiritual dangers attached to a cashless monetary system and the accepting of the Antichrist's number. They spiritualise this prophecy by saying that the Antichrist will only affect a person's ability to work (the hand) and his way of thinking (number in the forehead). Even though the Antichrist may issue a literal number or code system for funds transfer it will, according to them, be quite harmless. In this way they are joining Satan's propaganda campaign in which people will be deceived and brainwashed to accept the coming antichristian new world order.

If you are worthy to escape the tribulation period, the number of the Antichrist can never be imposed on you. If you are among those who are left behind, you will have to settle your case with the Lord at that time. Your allegiance to the true Messiah will imply that you will have to utterly reject the false messiah, his world government, his alliance of false religions,

his demand for personal worship, and his number for electronic funds transfer, irrespective of the severe consequences that you will have to face.

Those who declare their allegiance to the Antichrist by accepting his number, will be enfolded by the darkness of eternal condemnation: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name" (Rev. 14:9-11).

Those who will gain the victory over the Satanic conspiracy by not bowing the knee to Baal, will eventually be in the presence of God in heaven: "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and those who have the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass..." (Rev. 15:2).

The fate of the Antichrist

From the onset of the tribulation period, the Antichrist will know that he has limited time to establish Satan's kingdom on earth, as the true Christ promised to personally return and judge the Antichrist. However, he will not accept the inevitability of biblical prophecies and do everything within his power to oppose it. The tremendous personal attacks on Jesus at the time of His first coming, as well as the fierce efforts to eradicate the early Christian church, will be repeated during and prior to His second coming.

"And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh" (Rev. 19:19-21).

The final doom of the Antichrist is sure. He and the false prophet will be the first two persons to be cast into the lake of fire. A thousand years later Satan will join them here: "Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations... And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev. 20:7-10).

The followers of Jesus Christ get eternal life and will reign with Him forever. The followers of the Antichrist will be condemned to eternal death and will share his frightening judgement with him.

The right expectation

I can't conclude this message without ensuring that you have the correct, biblical expectation of end-time events. Our command is to wait for the Lord Jesus as the heavenly Bridegroom, and to be ready for His sudden coming. Our lamps must be filled with oil, which means that we should live dedicated, Spirit-filled lives in anticipation of His coming. We must also be found busy fulfilling the Great Commission by devoting ourselves in one way or another to the command of world evangelism. In short, we must have a Christ expectation and order our lives and spiritual priorities accordingly.

The great element of surprise in end-time prophecies is the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom at an hour when nobody expects it. We are looking forward to this event with a deep sense of joy and longing. We don't wait for the Antichrist. Although we actively oppose the preparations and stage-setting for the coming of the Antichrist, we are not waiting for his personal appearance.

Unfortunately, there are people who proclaim that the rapture will occur in the middle or at the end of the tribulation period. In this way they instil fear and anxiety in Christians by promoting an Antichrist expectation. When people's future expectation is wrong, they are also inclined to keep themselves busy doing the wrong things. They make all sorts of plans on how to evade public orders to accept the number of the beast, and how to elude the false world church. On the extreme side are those who devise survival strategies by storing canned food and water for the coming world-wide famine and persecution of Christians. There are even people who prepare places of refuge in isolated spots in the mountains.

Friends, *we* are waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will come at an hour when nobody expects Him. It will be of no avail to wait for the Antichrist and then add another 42 months of 1260 days to fix the date for the rapture in the middle of the seven year tribulation. The powers of darkness are also unable to schedule the time for the appearance of their cosmic messiah, even though certain New Age spokespersons have in recent years attempted to do so. First, the one who restrains the appearing of the Antichrist must be taken out of the way, and the time for that event is solely determined by God.

As far as we are concerned, the signs of the times are indicating the nearness of that day. If we watch and pray always, we will be counted worthy to escape all the terrible judgements of the tribulation period and to stand before the Son of Man (Lk. 21:36). Like Noah, Lot and their companions we will not be the subjects of God's wrath. It is not meant for the believers.

If you come over from darkness to the light you will also escape the judgements of the tribulation. The brilliance of a new day will dawn for you in the Father's house with its many mansions while on earth, spiritually speaking, it will be night when the Antichrist makes his appearance. Although he will initially pretend to be a peaceful man and a good leader who has the well-being of humanity at heart, that will only be the beginning of the biggest deception and the greatest tribulation of all time. Seek refuge with the Rock of the Ages, Jesus Christ, while there is still time.