

5. THE ANTICHRIST

**- alias the little horn, the man of lawlessness,
the false prophet**

The Antichrist is the vilest satanically empowered dictator that our world will ever know. He'll rule the whole world for a mercifully short period of three and a half years. We're not told from what country he'll arise or his name. Still, Gabriel told Daniel that "the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary" (Dan 9:26). It was the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, so we can expect the Antichrist to come from their revived empire. Scripture challenges the person who has insight to identify the name of the Beast from its number (666), but that won't be possible until that empire arises on the world scene. The emperor is commonly referred to as the Antichrist, although it is not a proper name in Scripture. Five books mention him: Daniel calls him 'the little horn', Paul calls him 'the man of lawlessness' (2 Th), 1 & 2 John talk about many antichrists, and Revelation calls him 'the second beast' and 'the false prophet.' Jesus doesn't talk about him directly but refers to him when he says: When you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation spoken of through the prophet Daniel (Mt 24:15, Mk 13:14).

The accounts are linked by the mention of the 'abomination that causes desolation' (Dan 9:27, 11:31, 12:11, Mt 24:15, Mk 13:14), 'he sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God' (2 Thess 2:4), and 'it ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast' (Rev 13:14). The 3 ½-year period of his reign is called 'a time, times, and half a time' (Dan 7:25, 12:7, Rev 12:14), 42 months (Rev 11:2, 13:5) or 1260 days (Rev 11:3, 12:6).

Daniel's vision of the Antichrist

Although the prophet Daniel lived 2600 years ago, he gives us the most information about the Antichrist (Dan 7-11). The name Antichrist is not used as a proper name in Scripture. Jesus does not name him. Paul calls him the 'man of sin' and 'the lawless one' (2 Thess 2:1-12), while John simply calls him 'the animal' or 'the beast.' Daniel calls him a 'little horn' and 'a despicable person.'

Daniel had a vision of four great beasts representing world kingdoms, the last of which was terrifying and very powerful, devouring the whole earth, and yet to be accomplished. It had large iron teeth and crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It had ten horns (powerful leaders), and while thinking about them, he saw another little horn coming up among them, and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. Why a little horn? It could imply youth, inexperience, or a lowly background. Daniel said he had eyes like a human being and a mouth that boasted with audacious claims. He watched him as he waged war against the saints and prevailed against them. He is allowed to oppress them for forty-two months (Dan 7:25, Rev 13:5). He'll attempt to alter times and laws, which may include the current calendar, religious holidays, and Judeo-Christian morality. He'll succeed for three and a half years, waging war against the saints and defeating them until the Ancient of Days comes and pronounces judgment in favour of the saints, and the time comes for them to take over sovereignty of the entire world (Dan 7:21-22).

At the height of his power, a divine court is set up to deal with him, and his power is taken away forever, and the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven is given to the saints (Dan 7:26-27).

Israel would undoubtedly have seen themselves as the saints mentioned here, but as we know from the Gospels, they failed to recognise Jesus as their Messiah and forfeited their right to reign with him. By God's grace, the Church, consisting of believers from all nations, will possess the kingship at the resurrection. They're co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17) and will inherit the kingship at his return and reign forever.

The saints who inherit the kingship are described four times (Dan 7:18, 22, 25, 27) as the saints of the high places (cf. heavenly realms, Eph 2:6)

and must refer to the Church. Most High, when referring to God, is always singular, as in Psalm 82:6 ‘sons of the Most High’. The plural form of ‘saints most high’ is more accurately translated as ‘saints of the high places.’

An angel interpreted the vision for Daniel:

The ten horns are ten kings who will rule this kingdom. Another king, different from the earlier ones, will arise after them and subdue three of them. He’ll speak against the Most High, oppress the saints of the high places, and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be delivered into his hands for a time, times, and half a time. But the court will sit, and his dominion will be taken away and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the saints of the high places. Their kingdom will be everlasting, and all rulers will serve and obey them (Dan 7:24-27).

A clue to the identity of the Antichrist is given in Daniel 9:26: The people of the *ruler* who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.

It was the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in 70 AD, and they are described here as the people of the ruler who will come (the Antichrist). This strengthens the interpretation that the toes of the statue Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about represent a revival of the Roman Empire at the end of this age. The legs are Rome, while the ten toes represent ten kings who will rule a revived of this empire, three of whom are uprooted by the Antichrist.

When the Antichrist rises to power, he’ll oppress the saints for three and a half years before being destroyed by the returning Messiah. The set times and laws he seeks to change may include religious holidays, Judeo-Christian morality, and the calendar year, which begins with the year of Jesus’ birth, 2030 being 2030 years since Jesus was born. (Actually, he must have been born earlier in 4-5 BC when Herod the Great, who tried to kill him, was still alive.)

He’ll confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven,’ and in the middle of the ‘seven,’ he’ll stop sacrifice and offering, and he’ll set up an

abomination that causes desolation at the temple, until the end that God has decreed for him is enacted (Dan 9:27).

This verse is important because Jesus refers to it in his discourse on the end-time. The ‘many’ referred to could refer to the majority of the leaders in Israel, and the seven-year treaty may include the building of a temple in Jerusalem because, in the middle of that period, he’ll increase his power by putting an end to the normal activities of the temple and setting himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Jesus’ teaching about the Antichrist

In Matthew 24, the disciples ask Jesus to give them the sign of his return and the end of the age, and that’s what he gave them. Nothing in his reply leads us to think about the temple’s destruction in 70 AD. After describing the beginning of birth pangs, he tells of worse pain to come. They would be persecuted and put to death, hated by all nations because of him. Many will turn from the faith and betray one another, false prophets will arise and deceive many people, and because of the increases in wickedness, the love of most Christians will grow cold, but those who stand firm to the end will be saved. God will judge when the gospel has been successfully preached to all nations, and then the end will come. All these events following the birth pangs will occur during the Great Tribulation. Therefore:

When you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then let those in Judea flee to the mountains. ... For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equalled again (Mt 24:15-16, 21).

Antichrist will do as he pleases. He’ll exalt himself to be as great as the commander of the Lord’s army, he’ll take away the daily sacrifices from the Lord, and he’ll demolish his sanctuary. He’ll be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must happen (Dan 8:11, 11:36). Although the saints are defeated by the Antichrist, those who die are soon resurrected to possess the kingship and reign with the Messiah.

Zechariah had previously prophesied:

A day of the Lord is coming, Jerusalem, when your possessions will be plundered and divided up within your walls. I’ll gather all nations to

Jerusalem to fight against it, the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the remainder won't be taken from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle (Zec 14:1-3).

With the Lord's help, Israel will consume all the surrounding nations and Jerusalem will remain intact in its place. God will destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. Daniel 8:9-12 suggests that the Antichrist's abominable act in the temple is the catalyst for the final battle of Armageddon. Islamic forces from Egypt are the first to rebel against Antichrist's blasphemy, with more Islamic forces coming from the north, invading many countries in the process (Dan 11:40).

Luke 21 has a different focus to Matthew 24. Jesus' discourse is in response to the disciples' remark on how beautiful the temple was. In his response, Jesus warns them that the temple will be destroyed, many Jews will fall by the sword, and the rest taken as prisoners to all the nations. Then in verses 25-28, Jesus jumps to the end of the age when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. His coming will be preceded by signs in the sun, moon, and stars. When Christians see these things, they are exhorted to lift up their heads because their redemption will soon follow.

Paul's teaching about Antichrist

Paul's teaching on the Antichrist is based on Daniel's prophecy:

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brethren ... don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day won't come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He'll oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Th 2:1, 3-4).

Take note of the order of events: First, there is world rebellion against God, then Antichrist appears, blaspheming God and persecuting the Church, and finally Jesus returns and gathers his people to himself. No pre-tribulation rapture here.

Paul describes the second coming of Jesus Christ when Christians will be gathered to him by resurrection and rapture. He won't return until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, exalting himself above everything. The rebellion is against God, Christians, Israel, his laws, the Church, and the Bible. When the whole world rises up in rebellion against God (Ps 2:1-3), God will respond in judgment as Daniel prophesied. Paul continues:

Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will accord with Satan's activity. He'll use all sorts of displays of power through deceptive signs and wonders, and all the ways that wickedness misleads those who are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion so that they believe the lie and are condemned for refusing to accept the truth and for delighting in wickedness (2 Th 2:8-10).

Daniel prophesied about the final world empire and the Antichrist, whom Jesus defeats at his second coming. The focus of Daniel 7 - 12 is on the Antichrist, his blasphemy in claiming deity, the abomination that causes desolation, his oppression of the saints, the time of distress, Antichrist's demise, the resurrection of the saints, and their future sovereignty over the world's kingdoms. The end-time prophecies often develop from events closer to Daniel's era, and especially concerning Antiochus Epiphanes, who is a type of the Antichrist.

The gospel will be preached in all the world, and those who refuse to believe in Jesus will be deceived by Antichrist, who will polarize the world's population into the righteous and the wicked. The choice will be to worship Jesus or Antichrist, or Satan, the power behind Antichrist. The majority will perish along with the Antichrist because they refuse to believe the truth and prefer to delight in their sinful behaviour: selfishness, dishonesty, homosexuality, abortion, drunkenness etc.

Beware of the Antichrist! He'll be more powerful than Hitler and will do as he pleases. He'll exalt and magnify himself above every religion, speaking amazing things against God. He'll succeed until what has been determined by God is carried out. He'll glorify the god of fortresses, nuclear military

power. He'll recognize those who honour him. He'll invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood, and he'll also invade the Beautiful Land (Israel) (Daniel 11:40-41). There will be continuous war and persecution during his reign.

The Antichrist in Revelation

The apostle John, in his visions, saw a beast coming out of the sea which had ten horns and seven heads (13:1). The sea symbolizes rebellious nations; the beast, world empire as described in Daniel 7:2-7. The dragon standing by the seashore is Satan, the evil power that lies behind world politics, especially empires that rule over the land God promised to Abraham's offspring forever (Gen 13:15). This beast from the sea that John saw is a future coalition of all nations, a worldwide empire. Satanically empowered, it will be overtly anti-Christian and anti-Jewish. It has seven heads and ten horns like the dragon that empowers it, linking it with Daniel's fourth beast (Dan 7:7). The whole world will be deceived by its ideology. This empire will be oppressive, violent, blasphemous, and dictatorial. The crowns are on the horns because the horns represent the ten leaders of this coalition. The seven heads are interpreted as seven mountains, symbolic of empires, and they also represent seven kings, the kingdoms' founders.

One of the beast's heads has a fatal wound which was healed, a way of saying that the empire ceased to exist for some time and then comes up out of the Abyss, the underworld (Rev 17:8). The Roman empire existed for hundreds of years and included parts of north Africa and the Middle East. Its revival constitutes the final, mighty, yet unstable, world empire.

The statue that Daniel saw had legs of iron (Rome) and feet that were part iron and part clay. The legs and feet all represent the same world empire; the iron legs representing the past Roman Empire, the unstable feet and toes, the confederation of nations that will rule the world at the end-time.

This empire will involve political, economic, cultural, and religious globalization, in which the UN plays a key role. The world will be full of wonder (Rev 13:3, 17:8) that an empire that had ceased to exist for many centuries could now be revived. All the inhabitants of the Earth will worship the beast, that is, all whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev 13:8). They will embrace it, submit to its laws, and worship Satan, the

power behind it. Just as the Father gave Jesus authority over the whole world (Mt 28:18), so Satan will give this empire his power, throne, and authority. It'll be very frightening, powerful, violent, destructive, and despotic.

The beast is given a mouth (the Antichrist), to utter proud and blasphemous speech during his rule of forty-two months. This is a reference to Daniel 7:8: This horn (the little horn) had eyes like the eyes of a human being and a mouth that spoke boastfully. An empire doesn't speak, but its king does. He demands universal adoration and vehemently opposes all worship except for himself. He'll embody satanic evil, have universal political power, and use nuclear weapons to achieve his ambitions. They're the only power he honors (Dan 11:38).

Antichrist and his empire will wage war against the saints and defeat them (Dan 7:21, Rev 13:7). That implies millions of martyrs. He'll have authority over every tribe, people, language, and nation. This will be the most intense and extensive persecution that the Church has ever undergone. If God had not informed us about what is to come, it would be a very confusing time for Christians. But God has warned us and told us to be patient and faithful, even unto death. The Antichrist will be a world dictator, more powerful than Hitler. Everyone will be forced to worship him and submit to his satanically inspired authority. Only those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life will have the courage to disobey him, at the cost of their lives.

He will succeed for three and a half years. Jesus said there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equalled again, probably referring to nuclear warfare. Jesus warned a future generation of Jews that when they saw the abomination that caused desolation in the temple, they should flee immediately to the mountains. If God didn't shorten those days, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect, those days would be shortened. War would continue for the last three and a half years with Jerusalem as the main centre of attention.

The Antichrist will be remarkably destructive and will destroy both mighty men and the saints. Deceit will prosper under his leadership. Daniel 9:26 says the people of the ruler who will come (the Antichrist) will destroy Jerusalem and its temple. The Romans did that in 70 AD. So the Antichrist will arise from the domain of the ancient Roman Empire, which included southern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. As his name suggests, he will

oppose God and the saints. God will allow him to conquer them during the three and a half years that precede the Messiah's arrival.

By demanding universal worship (2 Th 2:4), the Antichrist will cause the whole world to rebel against God. However, his empire will be unstable. He'll plunge the world into a war so horrific that it slaughters a third of the world's population (Rev 9:18). After uprisings from the south and the north, there will be rebellion from Gog in the east and the far north, a two-hundred million strong army released at the Euphrates River (Rev 9:13–16) and culminating in the battle of Armageddon at the Lord's return.

Gog is certainly there at the battle of Armageddon, where the birds are invited to feast on the dead armies (Ezek 39:4, 17-20, Rev 19:17-18, 21) and after which Israel is converted (Ezek 39:25, 29). Gog is distinguished from Antichrist in that Gog is buried in Israel (Ezek 39:11), whereas Antichrist is arrested and thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur (Rev 19:20).

According to C. F. Keil and most ancient interpreters, Daniel 11:40-45 no longer applies to Antiochus Epiphanes as the king of the north but to the Antichrist, the final enemy of the people of God. The king of the south is the first to engage the Antichrist in battle, then the Antichrist storms out against him with armies and naval forces, invading many countries in the process. Then reports from the East and the far North alarm him as Gog, the king of the far North, invades Israel.

The False Prophet

Two beasts are described in Revelation 13, a beast coming out of the sea (an empire, consisting of nations) and a beast coming out of the ground (a man, who is made of dust. John sees them in his vision as animals. The second beast is a bestial man, gentle like a lamb, but he speaks like a dragon, and he's a deceiver who performs miracles with satanic power. He is the Antichrist, the mouth of the Beast. John now sees him coming out of the ground. He exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf – only the king can do that. He instructs everyone to worship the Beast and be branded with his mark, his name, or the number of his name. He orders people to set up an image of the Beast, which he animates so that it speaks. In association with that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Th 2:4). This is the abomination that causes desolation,

standing in the holy place, spoken about by Jesus (Mt 24:35). A king and his kingdom are often identified with each other in Scripture; they have the same authority.

The Antichrist orders the inhabitants of the Earth (unbelievers) to set up an image in honour of the Beast and he gives breath to it so that it can speak and he executes anyone who refuses to worship this image. Everyone, whether rich or poor, is forced to receive the mark of the Beast on the right hand or forehead. Without the mark, nobody can buy or sell anything.

The mark is 666. Nobody will be able to identify the name it represents until he appears. The mark represents the name of the Beast and the number of his name, which is the number of a man. It's not always clear whether this refers to the name of the empire or the emperor.

666 is the number of the Beast, probably the first Beast John saw, not the Antichrist. It's the sum of the name. Deriving numbers from names is a practice called gematria. As Revelation is written in Greek, we need to think in terms of Greek spelling. For example, Jesus in Greek is Ιησούς. Ι = 10, η = 8, σ = 200, ο = 70, ύ = 400, ζ = 200. The number of Jesus' name is 888.

In later chapters, the Antichrist is called the the False Prophet. He forms a triumvirate with Satan and the Beast as they gather the kings of the world to fight at Armageddon (Rev 16:13). John sees the two beasts being caught like animals and cast into hell (Rev 19:20, 20:10). This seems to be the best interpretation. Paul says: The coming of the lawless one (the Antichrist) will accord with how Satan works, performing all sorts of signs and wonders to deceive those who are perishing (2 Th 2:9-10). The Antichrist is the False Prophet. The name False Prophet' does not occur outside of Revelation and in Revelation the Antichrist and the False Prophet are never mentioned together.

The death of Antichrist

Dan 7:11 Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words *the horn* (the Antichrist) was speaking. I kept looking until *the Beast* was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The Beast is always the empire in Daniel, it's the empire, seen as an animal, that

was burnt, but with the death of the empire goes the death of the emperor, as described in Revelation 19:20).

Dan 11:44–45 Reports from the East and the North will alarm him, and he'll set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He'll pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he'll come to his end, and no one will help him.

2 Th 2:8 Then *the lawless one* will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming.

Rev 19:19-20 Then I saw *the Beast* and the kings of the Earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. But *the Beast* was caught, and with him the False Prophet who had performed the signs on his behalf. With these signs, he'd deluded those who had received the mark of *the Beast* and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown *alive* into the fiery lake of burning sulphur. The Beast (the empire) and the False Prophet (the emperor) are both eliminated in hell. John's Beast resembled a leopard, but had paws like a bear and a mouth like a lion. It's that animal that was slain and its body thrown into the blazing fire).

Rev 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where *the Beast* and the False Prophet had been thrown. They'll be tormented day and night forever and ever.

In summary, we can see from these verses that the Antichrist is eliminated while fighting his wars. His place of death is between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea, at the beautiful holy mountain (Mount Zion). He is overthrown and destroyed by Jesus at his coming by the breath of his mouth, his powerful word, and the splendour of his coming. The Beast and the False Prophet are thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur, a metaphor for hell. Then follows Christ's millennial reign on Earth. When the thousand years are complete, Satan is captured and thrown into hell, where the Beast and the False Prophet were thrown a thousand years earlier. They are tormented day and night forever and ever. The thousand years between Christ's return and Satan's judgment is emphasized.

The ‘abomination of desolation’, or ‘the sacrilegious object that causes desecration’, spoken about by Jesus (Mt 24:15), is a statue or image of the Antichrist that can speak (Rev 13:15). Current technology makes this less surprising than it would have been for former generations.

Gog - The coalition from the far north

Gog is not a character that we know much about, but Jewish eschatology viewed Gog and Magog as enemies to be defeated by the Messiah, which would usher in the Messianic age.

The descendants of Noah listed in Genesis 10 give us an idea of how the earliest nations were related to one another. Noah and his three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japhet, were the only humans to survive the worldwide inundation. Ham was the ancestor of peoples who occupied Cush (Ethiopia/Sudan), Egypt, Libya, and Canaan, the latter being conquered by Israel. These nations were probably dark and the ancestors of Africans and South Asians. Shem was the ancestor of Middle Eastern peoples, the Semites. His sons were Elam (Iran), Asshur and Arpachshad (Iraq), Lud (Turkey), and Aram (Syria). Aram was the ancestor of Uz, Hul, and Gether, Arphachshad, the ancestor of Eber (the Hebrews).

Japhet was the father of Europeans. His sons were Gomer (Turkey), Magog (Scythians/Russians), Madai (Iran), Javan (Greece), Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras (Italy). Gomer was the ancestor of Ashkenaz (Germany), Riphath, Togarmah (Armenia), and Javan, the ancestor of peoples in Crete and Spain. The descendants of Gomer and Magog migrated north and are probably ancestors of Russians and northern Europeans. The Hindus of northern India are related; they speak an Indo-European language.

Ezekiel refers to Gog as the chief ruler of the nations of Meshech and Magog. The northern nations of Gomer and Togarmah are with him, and they are described as coming from the far north, which can only refer to Russia. Many nations are allied to him, including Muslim allies: Persia, Sudan, and Libya.

Gog represents all the fighting men of the north, Caucasians and Turkic peoples. Ezekiel says that this mighty horde of well-armed warriors will attack Israel at a time when they have been gathered from the nations and live in prosperity at the crossroads of the nations. This can only mean modern-day Israel.

This vast army is to be identified with the 200 million mounted troops who are released by angels at the Euphrates River to kill a third of mankind. Fire, smoke, and sulfur come from their horses' mouths, suggesting modern artillery. They are released at the blowing of the sixth trumpet. The seventh trumpet signals the Messiah's return.

When the sixth angel pours out the sixth bowl of God's wrath, the climax arrives, the annihilation of the armies laying siege to God's city of Jerusalem. This coincides with the Messiah's return and accompanying worldwide earthquakes of such a magnitude that have never occurred since mankind has been on Earth (Rev 16:18).

There is a symbolic mention of Gog and Magog at the end of the millennial reign of Christ and the saints (Rev 20:8). It is another rebellion by all the nations from the four corners of the earth who attack Jerusalem but should not be equated with the prophecies of Ezekiel 38 – 39 which are clearly premillennial.

Gog and Antichrist and the battle of Armageddon

Both Gog and Antichrist are involved in the end times, during the Great Tribulation period, but they should not be identified with each other. The more interesting question is the relationship between them. Daniel 11:40-44 tells us that near the end of the Tribulation, the king of the South (Egypt) will engage the Antichrist in battle. Then the king of the North, Gog, leading a coalition of world nations, will invade many nations before arriving in Israel for the battle of Armageddon. His forces will include large Shiite armies from the East (Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan). The Antichrist, alarmed by these events, will set out in great rage to annihilate many. Gog is killed

and buried in Israel (Eze 39:11), while Antichrist is captured alive and thrown into hell (Rev 19:20).

The following passages are relevant to the discussion: Genesis 10:1-7, Ezekiel 38-39, Daniel 11:40-45, Joel 2-3, Zechariah 12:1-11, Matthew 24:21-22, Revelation 6:12-17, 9:13-19, 16:12-16.