

Biblical Misconceptions: The Antichrist

Years ago I was introduced to the belief in the rise of the Antichrist and his persecution of Christians. In one publication there were depictions of believers being hunted down and decapitated in a mobile guillotine for not having the mark of the beast on their hands or foreheads. In more recent years novels have been written dramatizing the rise of this figure as well as movies, comic books and video games. These stories are frightening and entertaining but they demonstrate another biblical misconception that's been popularized over the years.

There's a long list of individuals who have been identified as the Antichrist. In World War II, It was Adolf Hitler. During the cold war Nikita Khrushchev, leader of the Soviet Union was given this title. In the early seventies, as the Paris peace talks to end the Vietnam war were underway, Henry Kissinger's name was transliterated into Hebrew letters, assigned numeric values using a mathematical formula and totaled. The sum of the values ascribed to the letters were then interpreted as proof that he was the Antichrist described in the book of Revelation. Who is the Antichrist, or, will there be a single individual we can identify as the Antichrist? Let's see what the scriptures have to say.

The term "***antichrist***" appears five times in the scriptures. All of these occurrences appear in the writings of John. Addressing gnostic influences, John writes, "***Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.***" (1 John 2.18). John states there were "***many antichrists***", and refers to a "***spirit***" or attitude, not a person. This attitude is one that opposes the Gospel and Christ. John defines this as he states, "***And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.***" (1 John 4.3).

This passage let's us know that the spirit of "***antichrist***" was present in the world at the time of John's writing, manifesting as a spirit of deception denying the identify of Christ. There are other ways that this spirit of unbelief can manifest in our time. Any doctrine that can't be supported by scripture partakes of the "***spirit***" of antichrist. Teaching things that are incorrect is a denial of Christ as it compromises the authority and identity of the word and Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith. A multitude of doctrines claim to be Christian and these have created division in the religious world. Paul indicates that this is the working of Satan who seeks to blind the minds of humans so they can't see the truth of the Gospel and be saved (2 Cor 4.4).

Since the beginning humans have rejected God's authority. Paul speaks of this as he deals with false teaching about the second coming that plagued the Thessalonians. Describing a coming apostasy, Paul explains how this could happen and what God would do. "***And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.***" (2 Thess 2.10-12). Christ also warned of future deceptions as he spoke to his disciples. "***For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall***

Biblical Misconceptions: The Antichrist

shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” (Matt 24.24). Deceivers and their lies would be very convincing. The fabric of the deception would be so believable that even those who understand the scriptures will be challenged at times. Well articulated arguments as well as “*great signs and wonders*” will deceive a great many people.

We have a defense against deception and that’s the Gospel, God’s power to save (**Rom 1.16**). As we turn our minds to God, submit to his will by accepting what we read and then obey it, we become enlightened in a godly way and this attitude will lead to salvation if we’re faithful (**Rev 2.10**). Evil rulers and powers will come and go. That’s the history of the world and mankind. The gospel will continue to be misrepresented, mistaught, ignored and denied. This is the spirit of antichrist, not some world ruler. That makes the idea of antichrist much more dangerous and immediate than misconceptions of a turbulent time in the future.