

Just What Do You Mean...

"Antichrist"

Few religious topics are as misunderstood as this. Read here an eye-opening explanation of the real meaning of "Antichrist."

YOU HAVE heard their names: Nero. Mohamed. Emperor Frederick II. Pope John XXII. Martin Luther. Hitler. Stalin. Mussolini.

All these individuals have had one thing in common.

In their days, they were all branded with the odious, fear-inspiring title ANTICHRIST! Dozens of others throughout the past two millennia have equally shared this dubious distinction.

Obviously they cannot all be the Antichrist. Or can they?

Who—or what—is "the Antichrist"? Why do so many ministers today warn of Antichrist, yet misunderstand who or what this personage is? What does *the Bible* say about this mysterious figure?

Confusion in Film

Nowhere is the widespread contemporary confusion over these questions more blatantly in evidence than in the recent motion picture titled *The Final Conflict*.

The Final Conflict is the third

and final installment of the *Omen* trilogy. This is a series of three motion pictures purporting to trace the birth, childhood and rise to power of the Antichrist. The events in these films appear to the public in the guise of Bible prophecy.

In the *Omen* story, the Antichrist is named Damien Thorn. Thorn has a bizarre genealogy—he is the offspring of Satan. Etched on his scalp is the so-called birthmark of the devil: 666.

A problem child, Damien spent his younger years plotting the violent demises of his parents, assorted relatives, tutors, household servants, priests, newspaper reporters and the like.

As an adult, Thorn has become politically ambitious. As *The Final Conflict* opens, we find Thorn at the head of the biggest multinational corporation in the world. His ultimate goal is world rulership.

Thorn is fully aware of his satanic identity. "I stand before you in the name of the one true god, Lord of the Lower Empire," he tells his disciples, "who was cast out of heaven but is alive in me."

Thorn seems on his way to the

top. But one obstacle stands in his way. That obstacle is described in the book of Hebron, which we are told is "one of the obscure books of the Apocrypha" (so obscure it doesn't exist—editor). This ancient volume is said to reveal that Jesus Christ is to be reborn as a *human child* somewhere in England!

Thorn must kill this returned Christ Child—or be destroyed by Him. "Slay the Nazarene and I reign forever. Fail and I perish," he declares.

The exact hour of Jesus' 20th-century rebirth is supposedly revealed by an astrological source, an alignment of three stars (called the *Trinity Alignment*) in the constellation of Cassiopeia.

In the role of a modern Herod, Thorn proceeds to have his evil agents round up all birth certificates for that day. Male children born at the revealed time are then systematically exterminated, to be absolutely certain the reborn Jesus is eliminated. (But the baby Jesus is born among gypsies, and he has no birth certificate!)

Meanwhile, the fate of the world

depends on a priest and six monks. They alone, we are told, can foil the evil plans of Thorn. The Holy Child will not be totally safe and secure until the Antichrist is dead.

There is only one way the Antichrist can be killed. He must be stabbed with one of the seven ancient daggers of Megiddo. One by one, however, the monks die in their attempts to skewer Thorn.

In the end, the "final conflict" of Good and Evil takes place in a lonely Celtic chapel. Damien Thorn is killed by a woman BBC correspondent, who stabs him in the back with one of the seven magical daggers.

The Holy Child is now safe. Good triumphs over Evil. A new era dawns.

Fiction not Fact!

How much, do you suppose, of the above scenario is actually found in Bible prophecy? All of it? Half of it? None of it?

Do you know?

It is to be hoped that even the most biblically illiterate moviegoers are perceptive enough not to mistake the imaginative concoctions of Hollywood for literal biblical truth. Filmmakers have a well-known and well-deserved reputation for bizarre renderings of Scripture.

And, it seems, most preachers are equally confused.

Do you know what the Bible really says about the Antichrist? You may be surprised!

To begin with, the Bible *never once* speaks of the Antichrist! However, the word *antichrist* does appear in Scripture. This word—meaning, from the Greek, "against the Messiah"—is found only in the New Testament, where it is used exclusively by the apostle John in his epistles.

What Scripture Reveals

Let's notice the four scriptures where the word is found:

I John 2:18—"... as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are *many antichrists*...."

I John 2:22—"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."

I John 4:3—"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."

II John 7—"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

These scriptures were written toward the end of the 1st century A.D. Even at that time, John writes, there were "*many antichrists*." Some 1,900 years ago, he could say that the spirit of antichrist "*even now already* is in the world."

In Bible usage, therefore, the term *antichrist* does not refer exclusively to a single political or religious leader yet to arise in our day.

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The four scriptures cited above clearly show that an antichrist is a deceiver and one who in some way denies that Jesus is the Christ. How does one deny Christ?

By evil works!

Jesus prophesied that many would come *saying* He is the Christ (Matthew 24:5). These, as Paul wrote to Titus, "*profess* that they know God; but *in works they deny him*...." They outwardly *claim* to be Christians, but they refuse to obey Him. The works of their lives are evil.

This is antichrist!

Further, John notes, an antichrist denies that Jesus Christ, through His Spirit, comes into the flesh of His people, living His life in them and enabling them to obey the law of God (I John 3:24; Galatians 2:20). This is the spirit of antichrist—a spirit of *lawlessness*, standing in opposition to God's law and way of life.

There is yet another, even more subtle way that many today deny Christ—and yield to the spirit of antichrist!

Alternative to Christ?

The Bible reveals that Jesus, the Messiah or Christ, must return to this earth with authority to establish a 1,000-year reign of peace—the Millennium. Were He *not* to return, "no flesh would be saved alive" (Matthew 24:22). Global extinction would be inevitable!

The Gospel or message of the Bible is clear: Jesus Christ is the *only hope* for this earth!

Yet man has devised his own counterfeits—philosophies, religions, systems of government—purporting to offer alternative solutions to global survival. Man believes that by channeling his resources, his technology, his intellectual energies into solving the problems he faces, he will be able to find *his own* solutions to the world's ills.

This is also the spirit of antichrist—a denial of the necessity of the Messiah and His mission! Man will discover that his go-it-alone approach will utterly fail him in the end!

We now see that in its true biblical sense, *antichrist* has a wide application. It can refer to persons and powers, attitudes and behaviors. The spirit of antichrist is found in individuals, in institutions, in religions, in societies and in governments.

In fact, there has been little in this world over the past 19 centuries since the days of Jesus that has not fallen within the broad spirit of antichrist! Little wonder, for the Bible reveals that *Satan* is yet "the god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4). The world is under Satan's rule, not God's government.

But Satan's days are numbered!

Yet what of all the talk by prophecy hobbyists about a coming Antichrist? What of all the nefarious deeds attributed to him?

Many use the term *Antichrist* to designate an end-time personality who will *embody the spirit of opposition* to Christ. This unbiblical usage is unfortunate.

The Bible nowhere speaks of an end-time Antichrist.

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"Antichrist"

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But the spirit of antichrist will blanket the earth, holding nations and kingdoms in its grip in this generation! Various individuals will personify that spirit in a powerful way. In national distress, men will turn to other *men* who appear to offer solutions.

The Bible specifically mentions two such individuals who will come to be virtually deified by mankind. One is called the "Beast"; the other the "False Prophet."

The term *Antichrist* is often applied to one or the other of these prophesied personalities. Often, preachers and prophecy buffs confuse the two and impute to one some of the attributes of the other. Some even blend, falsely, the two into one.

Satanic System

Let us briefly take a look at these two satanic personalities, and discover what the Bible really says about them.

The Beast is a great dictator of the book of Revelation who is to rule over 10 nations or groups of nations just before Christ's return (Revelation 17:12-13).

In the Bible, a beast is the symbol for a political system or its leader. Yet how many ministers understand this fact? In the Bible the Beast is symbolic of the political system we call the Roman Empire. Throughout the centuries since the fall of the Roman Empire in A.D. 476 (the "deadly wound" of Revelation 13:3), numerous revivals of the beast—the Roman political system—arose in Europe.

In Revelation 17, the revivals are represented symbolically by the seven heads of a beast. Six have already occurred from Justinian to Mussolini. One last restoration of this great political system is yet to arise. The end time Beast will rule over this final restoration of the Roman Empire.

In the book of Daniel, where he is called the "king of the north," we learn that the Beast will ultimately conquer portions of the Middle East (Daniel 11:40-41).

Working hand in hand with the

Beast will be the False Prophet (Revelation 16:13; 19:20), a great miracle-working religious figure. By means of lying wonders and false miracles he will command the obedience of millions (Revelation 13:13-14).

The apostle Paul wrote of the False Prophet in II Thessalonians 2:3, calling him the "man of sin," and "the son of perdition." This miracle-working individual—a great religious figure—will declare himself to *be* God (II Thessalonians 2:4)! Many will believe him to be Christ in the flesh!

Rise of the Beast

Let's notice now *how* the Beast will achieve great power and authority.

The Beast will not seize power

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by means of a coup or by military conquest. Ten leaders will "give their power and strength unto the beast" (Revelation 17:13). This charismatic individual will be widely viewed as a deliverer—the *only* man who can lead Western civilization out of its troubles!

The prophet Daniel sheds further light on the Beast's rise to power. He writes in a dual prophecy—anciently fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167-164 B.C. and again to be fulfilled in these last days (Matthew 24:15)—that the Beast will be a person "of fierce countenance and understanding dark trickery and craftiness" (Daniel 8:23, Amplified Bible). He will be a sly manipulator, cunning in the art of political maneuvering.

"And his power shall be mighty," Daniel continues, "but not by his own power. . . ." This is clearly a reference to the 10 rulers giving their power over to the Beast.

"And he shall corrupt and destroy astonishingly, and shall prosper, and do his own pleasure, and he shall corrupt and destroy the mighty men and the holy people . . ." the prophecy continues. "And through his policy he shall cause trickery to prosper in his hand; he shall magnify himself in his heart and mind, and in their security he will corrupt and destroy many."

The prophecy concludes with a clear statement of the time setting of these events. "He [the Beast] shall also stand up against the Prince of princes, but he shall be broken, and that by no human hand" (Dan. 8:25). The Beast will confront Jesus Christ at His Second Coming!

Religious Support

It will not be political craftiness alone that will propel the Beast to the top. His rise to power will be supported and encouraged by the False Prophet.

The False Prophet presides over a great, centuries-old religious system labeled "BABYLON THE GREAT" in Revelation 17:5. This system is an "image" or copy in the religious sphere of the Roman civil governmental system (Revelation 13:14).

This religious power is also personified as a fallen woman (Revelation 17:1) and a scarlet woman (17:3). In Bible symbolism, a woman is representative of a church (II Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 12). A fallen woman thus represents an apostate church.

In Revelation 17:3, we read that this scarlet woman sits "upon a scarlet coloured beast . . . having seven heads and ten horns." In other words, this religious power has historically presided over the restorations of the Roman political system (symbolized by the heads), and is *yet to be* associated with the final restoration (seventh and last head), made up of 10 powers (the 10 horns).

The Beast will be supported in his rise to power by the False Prophet. And in turn, the Beast will use his political might to enforce religious uniformity.

Beast's Mark and Number

In this regard, many readers of *The Plain Truth* have written inquiring

about the mysterious "number" and "mark" of the beast mentioned in Revelation 13:16-18. This bewilderment is totally unnecessary. The Bible clearly reveals what these things mean!

The number of the Beast is 666. It is described as the number of a man (v. 18). And we are told to count it.

In Greek—the language of the New Testament—letters of the alphabet have numerical values. The same principle is found in the use of Roman numerals (V = 5, X = 10, L = 50 and so on).

In the 2nd century A.D., Irenaeus, disciple of Polycarp, the apostle John's disciple, explained that in Greek the word *Lateinos*—meaning "Latin man" or Roman—adds up to 666. (L = 30; A = 1; T = 300; E = 5; I = 10; N = 50; O = 70; S = 200.) This, he stated, was the intent of the scripture.

The number 666 is thus anciently branded on the old Roman Empire and its revivals.

But what of the mark of the Beast? Some claim it is the swastika. Others that it is the social security number. Still others that it is the universal product code. These are all mere guesses—and wrong ones, at that! Notice what the Bible says about this mark:

The mark of the Beast is received in the right hand or in the foreheads of those subject to him (Revelation 13:16). Without it, one will be unable to conduct business, to "buy or sell" (v. 17).

Those who have the mark of the beast in their hands or foreheads will suffer the corrective plagues of God's judgment (Revelation 14:9-10; 15:1, 6; 16:1-2). These individuals are contrasted, in Revelation 14:12, with the saints who "keep the commandments of God."

The mark thus has something to do with commandment breaking. Those who have the mark will suffer divine plagues; those who keep the commandments will not. One group is forced to accept the mark; the other keeps the commandments of God. The mark involves obedience to human authority. It is symbolic of forced allegiance. Is there a specific commandment that is intended? Is there a commandment

that can be considered a sign of God's people?

A mark is a *sign* or a *brand* of identification. What commandment does the Bible call a *sign*?

There is only one: the *Fourth Commandment!*

Notice Exodus 31:12-17—"Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a SIGN between me and you throughout your generations. . . ." The keeping of God's Sabbaths is the sign identifying God's people!

This sign of God is also received symbolically in one's hand—symbolizing work or labor—and forehead—representative of the mind or intellect. See Exodus 13:9; Deuteronomy 6:1, 6-8; 11:18.

The mark of the Beast is clearly revealed as an enforced counterfeit



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of the sign between God and His people—specifically the observance of man-made holidays in place of those Sabbaths that God originally ordained! Those who do not fall into line and join in religious conformity—including participation in its false religious days—will not be able to hold a job or earn a living.

And, as in centuries past, many who refuse to receive the mark—who refuse to submit body and intellect to the Beast's domination—will suffer martyrdom.

For an in-depth look at this subject, request our free booklets, *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* and *Pagan Holidays or God's Holydays—Which?*

Then, Armageddon

What will be the ultimate fate of this satanic religious-political union? The Bible provides a graphic description.

The Beast and False Prophet will together muster armies to fight the

returning Christ (Revelation 16:13-16; 17:13-14). They will undoubtedly have convinced much of the world that Christ is really the Antichrist. Because of this deception, many will refuse to repent and submit to Christ at His return (Revelation 16:9).

This final climactic battle, commonly, but incorrectly, referred to as Armageddon, is called in the Bible "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14). The fate of the Beast, False Prophet and their armies in that confrontation was seen in vision by John (Revelation 19:11, 14-16, 19-20):

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. . . .

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

"And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. . . .

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

The Beast will not be stabbed by a magic dagger in a lonely chapel by a BBC correspondent! It will be Jesus Christ returned in *power* and *glory*—not as a reborn Christ Child—who will decisively overthrow the Beast and the False Prophet. They will be cast into a lake of fire and be *consumed!*

Satan's rule over the nations will be forever ended! □