

"you have heard that the Antichrist is coming..." 1 John 2:18

THE COMING ANTICHRIST

WHO IS HE? HOW WILL I
RECOGNIZE HIM?



“And this is the spirit of the **Antichrist**,
which you have heard was coming, and
is now already in the world.”

~ The Apostle John

The Coming Antichrist

Who is he? How will I recognize him?

What does the term antichrist mean to you?

Does the coming of the antichrist make you afraid? Does it trouble you as you think about the future of this world? Does it cause you to worry about the world in which your children will grow up? Or your grandchildren?

Antichrist means different things to different people depending on their background, their culture, and their religion. But out of all of the meanings and all of the feelings that it inspires, far and above it is considered to be something negative—even more than that, something terrifying.

For many, the antichrist isn't just a thing; it's an entire worldview. The antichrist is seen as a leader at the end time of our present world, a leader who takes the world community down a path of sin and destruction. While preaching peace, he brings devastation, and he does it all with immense deception. It's a picture and a term that brings chills to many.

But it doesn't have to be like this. Despite what we might today associate with the term, antichrist originates in the Bible where it is defined and where the followers of Christ are told what to do about it.

In this booklet, we are going to take a closer look at what the Bible has to say about the antichrist. We must cover a lot of territory to appreciate this, so I ask the reader to be patient. There are unexpected surprises in store.

Before we take this closer look, I would like to lay some groundwork by looking at what many modern Christian writers have said and the way in which beliefs about the antichrist have developed over time.

What Is Expected By Many Christians

There have been several well-known Christian writers over the last few decades who have put together a picture of the earth's last days before the return of Jesus. Books such as *The Late Great Planet Earth* and the *Left Behind* series have given details of what is expected. For the most part, all these books agree on what will take place and what will be the role of the antichrist. On the following pages these main points are summarized.

#1 Preceded by Sudden Defeat of Russian Invasion of Israel

One of the first signs heralding the antichrist's appearance will be a Russian invasion of the Holy Land.

The Russians are indeed coming—in one all-out attempt to crush God's chosen people and grab God's ancient land. (Mark Hitchcock & Thomas Ice, *The Truth Behind Left Behind*, 55)

So just as Ezekiel predicted long ago, they will be unprepared for this sudden flood of invading Russian and Muslim troops. (Hal Lindsey, *Apocalypse Code*, 79)

And yet, something completely unexpected—at least to the invaders—will take place. Somehow, miraculously, the invasion will be stopped. Though the Russians will attempt to obliterate Israel, their attempt will be foiled by God, but His intervention will not be obvious.

#2 Comes With Message of Love and Power

It is right around this time, in the resulting confusion from this unexpected reversal of fortune, that a relatively unknown figure will appear on the global scene. *Left Behind*, the first of a series of novels about this topic, describes the antichrist's rise to power in the following way:

You've become a popular man in this country seemingly all at once.
(Jerry Jenkins & Tim LaHaye, *Left Behind*, 270)

His appearance takes the world by surprise. But, it is a welcome surprise, because, not only is there confusion about the apparent destruction of the Russian invasion, but the rapture has taken place. Christians from all over the world have disappeared, no longer to return, their positive influence upon the world now gone. The antichrist steps into this chaos and is welcomed by the world, because, unlike everyone else who is reeling from what has happened, he has a plan:

His was a message of love and peace and understanding and brotherhood, and to quit fighting seemed to go without saying. (Jerry Jenkins & Tim LaHaye, Left Behind, 256)

But it wasn't just that he preaches love; his message is backed up by the miraculous:

Let me warn you personally to beware of such a leader of humanity who may emerge from Europe. He will turn out to be a great deceiver who will step forward with signs and wonders that will be so impressive that many will believe he is of God. (Jerry Jenkins & Tim LaHaye, Left Behind, 212)

#3 Unites World Under His Peaceful Rule

Eventually, this troubled world gives this man complete control. And with that control, his message of peace overcomes the chaos. For the first time, there is a true and complete world peace, as well as a united one-world government.

It is through an ingenuous settlement of the Middle East problem that the Antichrist makes good his promise to bring peace to a world terrified of war. After this, he will rapidly bring all nations under his control. (The Late Great Planet Earth, 152)

Preaching the brotherhood of man, the antichrist will unite the world even further:

Commentators and world leaders endorsed one world currency, one language. (Jerry Jenkins & Tim LaHaye, Left Behind, 415)

For the first time in the history of the world, Satan will get what he's been after all these years—the worldwide worship of earth's people. (Hal Lindsey, Apocalypse Code, 188)

From there he will turn his attention to the Jews, making a pact with Israel and vouching for their safety:

The full agreement...makes a solemn promise. Any nation that threatens Israel will suffer immediate extinction. (Jerry Jenkins & Tim LaHaye, Tribulation Force, 103)

But he will do more than that.

#4 Rebuilds Jewish Temple

These passages make it abundantly clear that the Jewish people will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem sometime before the midpoint of

the coming tribulation period. (Mark Hitchcock, *Is the Antichrist Alive Today?*, 49)

The Israelis will then be permitted to reinstitute the sacrifice and offering aspect of the Law of Moses. (Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 152)

And what will be the result of this?

#5 Claims To Be Long Awaited Jewish Messiah

In other words, this man will look good. He will look so good, in fact, that he will convince many Jews that he is the long-awaited Messiah. (Paul Crouch, *The Shadow of the Apocalypse*, 103)

Though he is actually the antichrist, many Jews will be deceived by his facade and his promises. His arrival will appear to them as the fulfillment of things spoken by their Old Testament prophets.

This is what is so dangerous about the antichrist. Not only will many Jews think he is the Messiah and that he is fulfilling their prophecies, but many in the world, perhaps even many of those who have become Christians after the rapture, will see him as the savior sent from God:

The antichrist will come on the scene and accomplish what no leader before him has been able to do: bringing peace to the strife-torn Middle East! No wonder the world will sit up and take notice! No wonder many will hail him as the Messiah! (Paul Crouch, *The Shadow of the Apocalypse*, 103)

Using his super-human wisdom to overcome poverty, hunger and war, he'll appear to be the Messiah. (Hal Lindsey, *Apocalypse Code*, 188)

In an incredibly sinister move, the antichrist will then attempt to don the mantle of Jesus Christ. In demanding worship, he will likely claim to be Jesus, and many will accept his claim.

And why wouldn't they? Doesn't this scenario sound like things the Bible says will take place when Jesus Christ returns? Consider the chart on the following pages; it details 16 similarities between the antichrist and the real Jesus Christ.

Similarities between the antichrist and the real Jesus Christ

ANTICHRIST	JESUS CHRIST
<p>Russian invasion of Israel near or during the time of Antichrist's coming:</p> <p>"The Russians are indeed coming..." <i>(The Truth Behind Left Behind, 55)</i></p>	<p>Russian invasion of Israel near or during the time of Christ's coming:</p> <p>"set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal." <i>(Ezekiel 38:1-2, cf. Daniel 11:40-45)</i></p>
<p>He will come suddenly:</p> <p>"propel him to world prominence so quick it'll make everyone's head spin." <i>(Left Behind, 323)</i></p>	<p>He will come suddenly:</p> <p>"Behold, I am coming as a thief." <i>(Revelation 16:15; Matthew 25:13)</i></p>
<p>Nations will no longer use their weapons:</p> <p>"War will seem to be a curious game that men used to play..." <i>(The Late Great Planet Earth, 152)</i></p>	<p>Nations will no longer use their weapons:</p> <p>"Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." <i>(Micah 4:3, cf. Psalm 72:7; Zechariah 14:11)</i></p>
<p>Deserts and wastelands will blossom:</p> <p>"a synthetic fertilizer that caused the desert sands of Israel to bloom like a greenhouse." <i>(Left Behind, 8)</i></p>	<p>Deserts and wastelands will blossom:</p> <p>"the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly..." <i>(Isaiah 35:1-2, cf. Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35)</i></p>
<p>Goal to lift mankind to a higher place:</p> <p>"...I believe we are about to usher in an almost utopian global society..." <i>(Tribulation Force, 132)</i></p>	<p>Goal to lift mankind to a higher place:</p> <p>"But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth." <i>(Isaiah 11:2-4, cf. Isaiah 35; Isaiah 65:25)</i></p>
<p>Jews will believe he is the Messiah:</p> <p>"convince many Jews that he is the long-awaited Messiah." <i>(The Shadow of the Apocalypse, 103)</i></p>	<p>Jews will believe he is the Messiah:</p> <p>"they will look on Me whom they pierced." <i>(Zechariah 12:10, cf. Isaiah 25:9; Matthew 23:37-39)</i></p>

ANTICHRIST	JESUS CHRIST
<p>He will make a covenant with the Jews: “he will sign a treaty with Israel.” <i>(Tribulation Force, 72)</i></p>	<p>He will make a covenant with the Jews: “I will make a covenant of peace with them.” <i>(Ezekiel 34:25, cf. Jeremiah 31:31; Ezekiel 37:26)</i></p>
<p>Israel protected from other nations: “any nation that threatens Israel will suffer immediate extinction.” <i>(Tribulation Force, 103)</i></p>	<p>Israel protected from other nations: “and no one shall make them afraid.” <i>(Zephaniah 3:13, cf. Jeremiah 30:10; Ezekiel 34:28; Zechariah 14:11)</i></p>
<p>He will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem: “The Jewish people will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem...” <i>(Is the Antichrist Alive Today? 49)</i></p>	<p>He will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem: “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob...” <i>(Isaiah 2:2-3, cf. Isaiah 60:7; Jeremiah 33:10-11; Joel 3:18; Zechariah 6:12)</i></p>
<p>Jerusalem will become one of the centers of the world: “Jerusalem will serve as the Antichrist’s religious capital.” <i>(Is the Antichrist Alive Today? 52)</i></p>	<p>Jerusalem will become one of the centers of the world: “At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD...” <i>(Jeremiah 3:17, cf. Micah 4:2; Matthew 5:35)</i></p>
<p>Many will think he is Messiah or Jesus: “no wonder many will hail him as the Messiah!” <i>(The Shadow of the Apocalypse, 103)</i></p>	<p>Many will think he is Messiah or Jesus: “Behold, your King is coming to you: He is just and having salvation...He shall speak peace to the nations...” <i>(Zechariah 9:9-10, cf. Ezekiel 37:24; Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 8:20-23)</i></p>
<p>He will create a “one-world religion”: “When Bruce got to the part about the great one-world religion that would spring up...” <i>(Left Behind, 426)</i></p>	<p>He will create a “one-world religion”: “All flesh shall come to worship before Me, says the LORD.” <i>(Isaiah 66:23, cf. Zephaniah 3:9; Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 14:16)</i></p>

ANTICHRIST	JESUS CHRIST
<p>He will create “one world government”: “after this he will rapidly bring all nations under his control.” <i>(The Late Great Planet Earth, 152)</i></p>	<p>He will create “one world government”: “For out of Zion shall go forth the law... He shall judge between the nations...” <i>(Isaiah 2:3-4, cf. Daniel 2:44; Zechariah 9:10; Psalm 72:8; Revelations 11:15)</i></p>
<p>He will be worshiped as the Son of God: “he...will order himself to be worshipped as the Son of God.” <i>(Divine Institutes 7:17, Lactantius [AD 307])</i></p>	<p>He will be worshipped as the Son of God: “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...” <i>(Philippians 2:10, cf. Psalm 2:12; Zechariah 14:9)</i></p>
<p>Nations will oppose him: “war will engulf the world as a trio of nations see through the facade of the Antichrist...” <i>(The Shadow of the Apocalypse, 109)</i></p>	<p>Nations will oppose him: “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?” <i>(Psalm 2:1-3, 8-9, cf. Psalm 110:5; Zechariah 14:17-18; 1 Corinthians 15:24-25)</i></p>
<p>Those who oppose him will perish: “they will be utterly destroyed.” <i>(Nicolae, 73)</i></p>	<p>Those who oppose him will perish: “For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.” <i>(Isaiah 60:12, cf. Isaiah 11:4; Zechariah 14:17; Psalm 72:9)</i></p>

#6 Virtually indistinguishable From The Real Christ

Modern writers take their description of the antichrist one step further:

*The future antichrist will be a substitute for Christ, **as much like Jesus as possible** for a tool of Satan to be. (Mark Hitchcock & Thomas Ice, *The Truth Behind Left Behind*, 131).*

*But the Antichrist will also be ‘in place of’ Christ. He will be **an amazing parody or counterfeit of the true Christ**. He will be a substitute Christ, a mock Christ, a pseudo Christ, an imitation Christ. (Mark Hitchcock, *Is the Antichrist Alive Today?*, 17)*

This is why all the connections between the antichrist and Jesus exist; the antichrist is meant to be just like Jesus—and in that way, filled with deceit, he can dupe the world.

Perhaps even his hands and side will be pierced.

This picture is indeed troubling! These writers are saying the last days will be a time overflowing with deception; a time when even Christians will be fooled into following the antichrist and giving themselves over to him.

Though he will bring peace to the chaos, though he will unite the world under one religion, and though he will claim to be Jesus Christ, true Christians cannot allow themselves to believe his deceptive words.

But What If These Writers Are Wrong?

What if it is the modern Christian writers who have made a mistake? What if there isn't any antichrist who is coming? What if the one they call "antichrist" actually *is* the real Christ?

Is this possible?

It happened in the first century when Jesus first came to the Jewish people. Could it happen again when he returns, but this time to all peoples?

It's a frightening thought, but even a cursory look at what the Bible says about the antichrist reveals some troubling details that don't quite fit the picture painted by these writers.

Bible Picture Of Antichrist

The first detail that is troubling concerns the word translated "antichrist." It appears only five times in the entire Bible, all found in the letters of the apostle John. No other writer uses the word. It is a term absent from the Old Testament, as well as from all of the prophecies that are considered to be specifically about the last days before Jesus returns.

What if it is the modern Christian writers who have made a mistake? What if there isn't any antichrist who is coming? What if the one they call "antichrist" actually is the real Christ?

Why would something so important be left out of these other major prophecies? Next, consider some of the characteristics that John associated with the Biblical antichrist. Here is John's first use of the word:

*Little children, **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 John 2:18)*

Did you notice what doesn't fit with the view presented by the writers quoted earlier? How many antichrists are there? And when did they exist?

While we don't know the specific number of antichrists, we can certainly say that John refers to more than one! The first two times John uses the term, he refers to "antichrists" (plural). For him, the word isn't about a sinister individual who is going to attempt to trick the world into thinking he is Jesus. It's about a group of people; and, for John, these people had already come. In the first century, when John wrote this letter, he could say, "even now many antichrists have come."

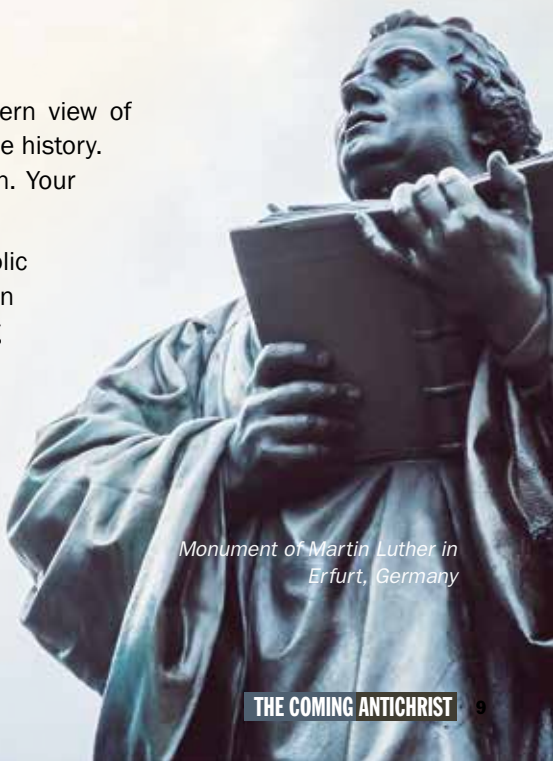
The three other times when the apostle John uses this word are much the same. The Biblical antichrist seems to be very different than the antichrist described in modern Christian literature.

Why is that?

Some History

To understand more about this modern view of the antichrist, we need to explore some history. I ask your patience in this exploration. Your patience will be well rewarded!

For many centuries, the Catholic Church was the only major Christian denomination within Europe. Starting around the early 1500s, with a movement called the Reformation, this largely began to change. Martin Luther, a Catholic monk who was based in Germany, began to call attention to certain excesses he saw within the Church. This eventually led to his split from the Church and the creation of his own Christian



*Monument of Martin Luther in
Erfurt, Germany*

denomination, the Lutherans. As part of this split, he created one of the first translations of the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek, and into the language spoken by the common people, which, in Martin Luther's case, was German.

Around the same time, others, such as William Tyndale in England, were busy doing the same, translating the Bible into their own country's language.

This idea of translating the Bible into the common language of the people was very much against the stance of the Catholic Church. They argued that the Bible was for the priests, not the people, and should remain in Latin. Martin Luther was given protection from the Church's wrath by one of the German nobles. William Tyndale did not fare so well. He was captured by the Catholic Church and burned at the stake for his work of translation.

Clearly, standing against the Church was not a simple task, nor was it safe. Men who did so had to be completely committed to what they were doing—fully convinced the Bible belonged in the hands of the people, and, fully convinced the Church was in the wrong. Martin Luther and William Tyndale, along with a number of the other reformers, definitely felt this way. They were convinced the Church was not actually Christ's representative on earth, but rather, it was the enemy of Christ, that is, it was full of antichrists:

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Tyndale ridiculed this claim. No salvation could come from the Church, he said. Popes, cardinals and bishops differed only in name from the Pharisees and Antichrists who had taken Jesus in front of Pilate. 'They do all things of a good zeal, they say, they love you so well,' Tyndale warned, 'that they had rather burn you than you should have fellowship with Christ.' (Brian Moynahan, *God's Bestseller*, 137)

Luther had similar feelings:

Luther held that every pope was Antichrist even though personally exemplary, because Antichrist is collective: an institution, the papacy, a system which corrupts the truth of Christ. (Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 95-97)

To back up his claim, Luther associated this concept of antichrist with what the people could now read in the book of Revelation. Revelation describes a harlot riding on a beast—a harlot called “Babylon” who sits on seven hills.

Luther maintained this was a prophecy about the antichrist Roman Church. To make this clear, even for those who were illiterate, Luther placed a woodcut (i.e., an image printed from a design cut in a block of wood) in his German translation of the Bible. Take a close look at the woman in the woodcut.



(From Luther's German Translation of 1534)

Do you notice anything strange about what is on her head?

The woman is wearing a *papal tiara*. Luther wanted the identification of this harlot of Revelation to be unmistakable.

As time went on, this interpretation of Revelation began to catch on with the people. Understandably, the authorities within the Catholic Church were concerned. It was needful, so they felt, for the Church to develop its own interpretation of Revelation to combat what was being taught to the people.

Coming to the defense of the papacy, Spanish Jesuits presented two alternative approaches to the historicism of the Reformers. One response was that of Francisco Ribera (1537-1591), a professor at Salamanca, who taught that John in Revelation only foresaw events of the near future and of the final things at the end of the world, but had none of the intervening history in view. The Antichrist was defined as a future individual who would arise in the end times. Babylon was seen as Rome—not under the popes—but in a future corrupted state. This was the beginning of many of the ideas that are now a part of the futurist approach to Revelation. (Steve Gregg, Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary, 31-32)

This interpretation laid the groundwork for the understanding of the antichrist that is now asserted by many Christians. Just consider all of the connections:

Rome's reply to the Reformation in the 16th century included an answer to the prophetic teachings of the Reformers. Through the Jesuits Ribera and Bellarmine Rome put forth her futurist interpretation of prophecy... Bellarmine, like Ribera, advocated the futurist interpretation of prophecy. He taught that antichrist would be one particular man, that he would be a Jew, that he would be preceded by the reappearance of the literal Enoch and Elias, that he would rebuild the Jewish temple at Jerusalem, compel circumcision, abolish the Christian sacraments, abolish every other form of religion, would manifestly and avowedly deny Christ, would assume to be Christ, and would be received by the Jews as their Messiah, would pretend to be God, would make a literal image speak, would feign himself dead and rise again, and would conquer the whole world. (Henry Grattan Guinness, Romanism and the Reformation: From the Standpoint of Prophecy, 268-269)

Thus, the belief in the antichrist that is held by many Christians today was actually created by the Jesuits as a way to disassociate the Catholic Church from the beast and harlot of Revelation!

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largely a creation of the Catholic
Church in the late 1500s!*



It was not developed as a means of *understanding* Scripture, but rather of obscuring it, as the Church attempted to reaffirm its hold upon the Bible.

Think about how utterly startling this is: *Christianity's Antichrist of today is largely a creation of the Catholic Church in the late 1500s!*

The Biblical Antichrist

Who, then, is the antichrist as presented in the Bible? Since the term is used only five times, all of the passages can easily be listed here:

*Little children, 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. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 John 2:18-19)*

*Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is **antichrist** who denies the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22)*

*By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the **Antichrist**, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. (1 John 4:3)*

*For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an **antichrist**. (2 John 7)*

We learn the following about the antichrist from these passages:

- There were many antichrists.
- They existed in the first century.
- They “went out from us”, that is, they were Christians.
- They denied “the Father and the Son.” That is, they denied God sent His son as the savior from sin and death.
- Specifically, they taught that Jesus had not come “in the flesh.”

These ideas are extremely specific. Not only so, they present a picture clearly different from the supernatural Antichrist that modern Christians expect.

Who, then, was John talking about? What group in the first century had left Christianity, denied the Father and the Son, and taught that Jesus didn't actually come in the flesh?

Gnostics

In considering Christian history, the characteristics brought out by John essentially leave only one option: groups collectively called "Gnostics." While there are a number of groups encompassed historically by this term, in all cases their Gnosticism was a blend of Christian, Jewish and Greek beliefs.

Gnosticism was a philosophical system spawned primarily in Egypt and Syria, though it spread to Rome, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Persia. It borrowed elements from Judaism, Christianity, Greek philosophy, and oriental mysticism. (Howard Vos, Highlights of Church History, 31)

As a result of their Greek beliefs regarding the material world (that anything physical was evil), Gnostics believed the major problem confronted by Christians was not sin, but was rather a lack of knowledge—knowledge about the material world and about the good god, who was spiritual:

In these gnostic gospels and related texts, the human problem that is addressed is not sin but rather ignorance, and hence Jesus does not save people from their sins but rather communicates knowledge to address human ignorance and bring about enlightenment... People have become mixed up in this world of death, and they no longer remember who they are: they have forgotten that they are children of the divine, with the light of the divine within. As the Gospel of Mary has Jesus tell the disciples: 'There is no such thing as sin, but you create sin when you mingle as in adultery, and this is called sin.' (Marvin Meyer, *The Gnostic Gospels of Jesus*, xxi)



“The Messiah’s body was considered by some only to be an appearance...”

This belief about the material world also had odd effects upon the Gnostic belief about Jesus himself. Since all that was material was evil, and Christ was not evil, something had to be done about the fact that he was flesh and blood:

The Messiah’s body was considered by some only to be an appearance, by others a mere human body which the Messiah used from his baptism until his death on the cross. (Howard Vos, Highlights of Church History, 32)

One of the characteristics of Gnostic doctrine was its denial that the Savior was possessed of a material, fleshly body. (Jaroslav Pelikan, The Emergence of Catholic Tradition, 89)

This would seem to be exactly what John was attempting to combat: those who taught Christ had not come in the flesh were *antichrists*, that is, they set themselves against the true Christ. For this reason, throughout the entirety of his first epistle, John seems to stress Christ’s physical body (1 John 1:1, 5:6) and the importance of recognizing the evils of sin (1 John 1:8-10, 2:1-2, 3:5-6, 4:10).

This early Christian splinter group no longer exists, so do John's teachings apply at all today? Should they have any impact upon how Christians today live their lives?

Perhaps, and in a way most unexpected.

Relevance To Our Day

Gnosticism disappeared centuries ago, but the thinking that generated it hasn't; the blending of Jewish, Christian, and especially Greek beliefs continued after the first century:

If Paganism was conquered by Christianity, it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism. The pure Deism of the first Christians, (who differed from their fellow Jews only in the belief that Jesus was the promised Messiah,) was changed, by the Church of Rome, into the incomprehensible dogma of the trinity. Many of the pagan tenents, invented by the Egyptians and idealized by Plato, were retained as being worthy of belief. (Peter Eckler and Edward Gibbon, History of Christianity, xvi)

This blending of Christianity with Greek philosophy has brought about the similar result to the Gnostics—a teaching that, in some ways, continues to deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh:

The early Christian definitions of dogma drew on Greek thought in general and, in some cases, on Neoplatonic philosophy in particular. Out of this borrowing of categories not derived from the Bible came basic, indeed crucial, definitions concerning both the Trinity and Christology. ("Christianity", Macropaedia Encyclopedia Britannica, 1989)

Historically, it is acknowledged that the teaching of the Trinity was developed by the blending of Christianity with Greek philosophy—the same type of blending that led to the creation of John's antichrist. Not only so, doesn't the teaching of the Trinity effectively deny too that the Jesus came in the flesh?

Indeed, many Trinitarians would heartily agree that Jesus had a fleshly body, but what about a fleshly nature? Could the Lord Jesus Christ have actually sinned? Or were his temptations simply a game in which, as the Trinity teaches, he couldn't possibly give in because he was God Himself?

By its very nature, the teaching of the Trinity can't possibly teach Christ truly came in the flesh.

It can state he was 100% man and 100% God, but even that creates unresolvable confusion.

Perhaps, then, this study of the antichrist isn't just a call for us as Christians to consider our beliefs about end times, *but also to consider our beliefs about the Lord Jesus*. Does our theology allow us to truly believe that Jesus came in the flesh?

If not, is it possible the apostle John would consider *our* theology to be that of the antichrists?¹

Conclusion

Does all this theology really matter? Isn't it all theoretical? When Jesus actually comes, won't these finer details be finally clarified?

Perhaps, except that when Christ comes, considering all the similarities he has with the antichrist described by Christianity, how many Christians will mistake Jesus for the antichrist?

It may seem unbelievable, but it happened before: The Jews, the people of God, failed to recognize the Christ when he first came.

Yet, perhaps one of the most terrifying things isn't just the mistaken identity of the antichrist—it's the attitude of modern Christianity itself. In their common literature, the antichrist and Christians are pitted against one another, the two sides are in a literal war.

Surely, this is the greatest tragedy: Though Jesus Christ was rejected by his people at his first coming, those who call themselves his people today are set to make the same mistake.

*Soon enough it wouldn't matter who might bad-mouth him to [the antichrist]. They would be mortal enemies anyway. (Jerry Jenkins & Tim LaHaye, *Nicolae*, 293)*

*Most of those who become believers during that period will be killed. (Hal Lindsey, *Apocalypse Code*, 102)*

What he had been learning from Bruce and his own study of prophecy indicated that the day would come when the Antichrist would no longer

¹ For the reader interested in exploring more about the nature of God and His Son Jesus, this same writer has another booklet titled, *Who is the Living God?*. See the back page for more information.

be a deceiver. He would show his colors and rule the world with an iron fist. He would smash his enemies and kill anyone disloyal to his regime. That would put every follower of Christ at risk of martyrdom. (Jerry Jenkins & Tim LaHaye, Tribulation Force, 356)

And so, Christians are encouraged to band together and resist:

'Tribulation Force,' Bruce said, looking at Rayford and rising to scribble it on his flip chart. 'I like it. Make no mistake, it won't be fun. It would be the most dangerous cause a person could ever join. We would study, prepare, and speak out. When it becomes obvious who the Antichrist is, the false prophet, the evil, counterfeit religion, we'll have to oppose them, speak out against them. We would be targeted. Christians content to hide in basements with their Bibles might escape everything but earthquakes and wars, but we will be vulnerable to everything.' (Jerry Jenkins & Tim LaHaye, *Left Behind*, 420)

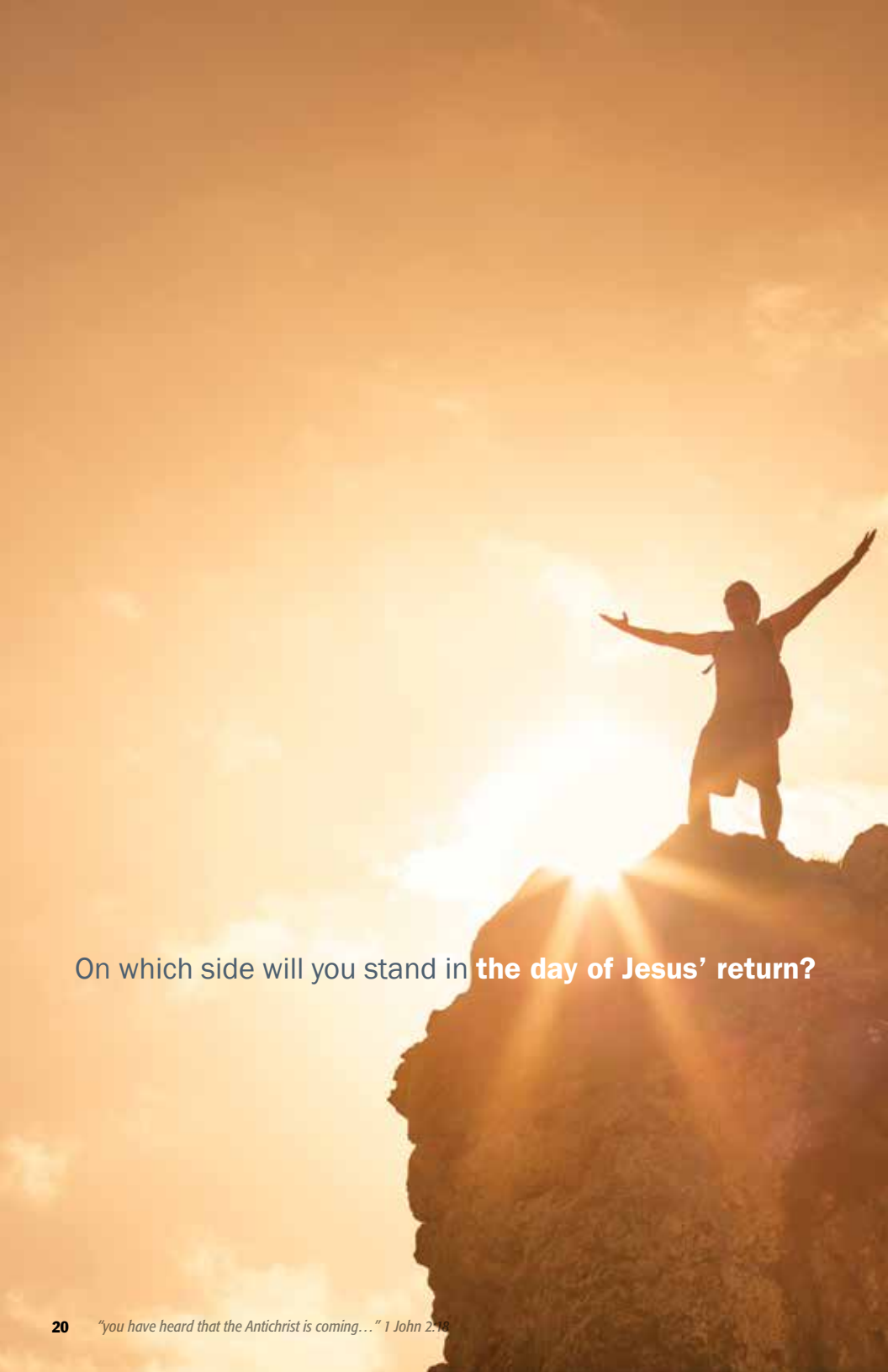
Surely, this is the greatest tragedy: Though Jesus Christ was rejected by his people at his first coming, those who call themselves his people today are set to make the same mistake. They will fight *against* their Messiah. They will hurl insults at him. And, in resisting him, the true Christ, they will stand against the very man whom they claim to love.

Could this *actually* happen?

Perhaps with all we have seen about the development of the modern belief concerning the antichrist, this is the wrong question to ask.

Maybe the real question should be: On which side will you stand in the day of Jesus' return?

~ Jason Hensley



On which side will you stand in **the day of Jesus' return?**



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