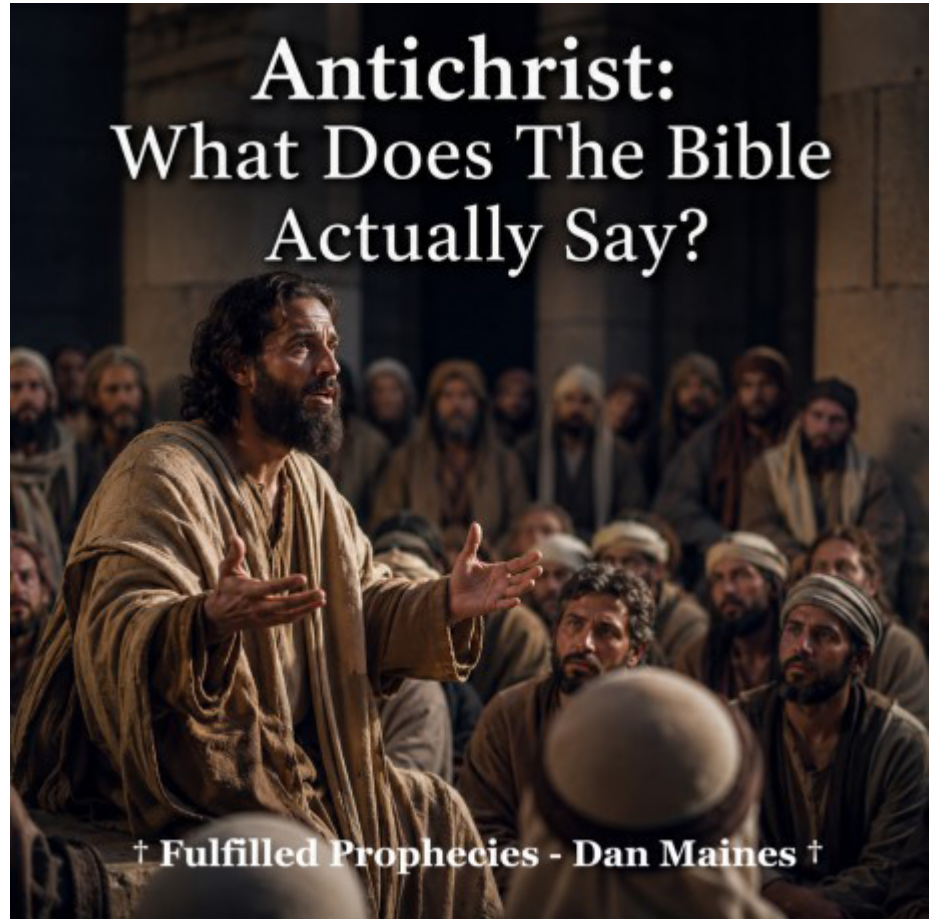


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Antichrist: What Does The Bible Actually Say?



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† One of the greatest sources of confusion in modern Christianity is that many people have accepted a definition of "antichrist" that the Bible itself never gives.

† The word antichrist appears only in John's letters. It is never found in Daniel, the Olivet Discourse, 2 Thessalonians, or Revelation. If we want to understand antichrist, we must let

John define it instead of importing ideas from unrelated passages. (John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

† Scripture consistently points us back to the first-century conflict between those who confessed Jesus as the Christ and those who denied Him. John's own audience was already facing this danger. (1 John 2:18; 1 John 4:1)

1 John 2:18

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.

† John did not say the antichrist would appear thousands of years later. He told his readers they were already living in the last hour. (Hebrews 1:2; Hebrews 9:26)

† John said many antichrists had already arisen. That alone overturns the popular idea of one future worldwide antichrist. (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7)

† The existence of many antichrists was evidence to John's audience that they were living in the last hour of the Old Covenant age. (Matthew 24:34; Hebrews 8:13)

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be evident that they all are not of us.

† John explains exactly who these antichrists were. They arose from within the visible Christian community before departing from it. (Acts 20:29-30)

† This isn't the description of a future world ruler. It is the description of apostates who abandoned the truth about Christ while the apostles were still alive. (2 Peter 2:1-2)

† Their departure exposed that they never truly belonged to Christ, even though they had once associated with His people. (Matthew 7:21-23; 1 John 4:1)

1 John 2:22

Who is the liar except the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

† John plainly defines antichrist instead of leaving us to speculate. An antichrist is one who denies that Jesus is the Christ. (John 20:31)

† Antichrist is not defined by political power, military conquest, or economic control. It is defined by rejection of Jesus Christ. (1 John 5:1)

† Anyone who rejected the Father by rejecting the Son stood opposed to God's revealed Messiah. (John 5:23; John 15:23)

1 John 2:23

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

† John continues defining antichrist by focusing on a person's confession about Jesus Christ, not by political influence or military power. (John 5:23)

† Rejecting the Son is inseparable from rejecting the Father because the Father revealed Himself through His Son. (John

14:6-9)

† The issue throughout John's letter is sound doctrine concerning Christ, not speculation about a future individual. (1 John 5:20)

1 John 4:3

and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now it is already in the world.

† John moved beyond individuals and spoke of the spirit of antichrist, the teaching that rejected Jesus as the Christ. (1 John 4:1)

† He again reminded his readers that this spirit was already in the world. He was not directing them to a distant future generation. (Colossians 1:5-6)

† False teaching was already spreading throughout the churches during the apostolic age, exactly as Jesus and the apostles had warned. (Matthew 24:11; Acts 20:29-30)

2 John 7

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

† John once again identified many deceivers, not one future individual. (1 John 2:18)

† Their defining error was denying the truth about Jesus Christ. That was the issue John repeatedly addressed. (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1-3)

† Scripture allows Scripture to define its own terms. Every occurrence of antichrist points to those opposing Christ in the first-century church. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

2 John 9

Anyone who goes too far and does not remain in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who remains in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

† John immediately continues the discussion by warning about abandoning the doctrine of Christ. The context never changes to a future political figure. (2 John 7)

† Remaining in Christ's teaching is presented as the safeguard against deception. (John 8:31-32)

† The entire context concerns false teachers who were already troubling the churches during the apostolic age. (Acts 20:29-30)

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

No one is to deceive you in any way! For it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

† Paul never used the word antichrist in this passage. That title has been added by later theological systems, not by Scripture itself.

† The man of sin should be understood in the context Paul gave to the Thessalonians, not by combining unrelated passages from different books. (2 Thessalonians 2:5)

† Sound Bible study lets each passage speak within its own historical setting before attempting comparisons with other texts. (Acts 17:11)

Matthew 24:24

For false christs and false prophets will arise and will provide great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

† Jesus warned about false Christs and false prophets, but He never called them antichrist. We shouldn't combine separate biblical terms unless Scripture itself does so. (1 John 2:18)

† These deceivers were part of the first-century events Jesus said would occur before that generation passed away. (Matthew 24:34)

† Allowing each passage to stand in its own context protects us from creating doctrines the Bible never states. (Acts 17:11)

Acts 20:29-30

I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them.

† Paul's warning perfectly agrees with John's description of antichrists who came from among the believers before departing from the faith. (1 John 2:19)

† The greatest threat to the early church came from false teachers arising within and around the churches, not from a single future individual. (2 Peter 2:1)

† Both Paul and John warned their own first-century audiences about dangers they would personally face. (Acts 20:31; 1 John 4:1)

Revelation 13:1-2

And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten crowns, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne, and great authority.

† One of the biggest surprises for many Christians is that the word antichrist never appears anywhere in the book of Revelation. Although countless books, movies, and sermons identify the beast as "the Antichrist," John never makes that connection. (1 John 2:18, 22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7)

† When John wanted to teach about antichrist, he did so in his letters, where he clearly defined the term. When he wrote Revelation, he described the beast without ever identifying it as antichrist. We shouldn't combine these figures unless Scripture explicitly does so. (2 Timothy 2:15)

† The beast has its own identity, symbolism, and historical context within Revelation. Likewise, the antichrists of John's letters have their own identity and context. Sound interpretation allows each passage to speak for itself before drawing conclusions. (Revelation 1:1-3; Revelation 17:7-18)

Daniel 7:8

While I was thinking about the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the previous horns were plucked out before it; and behold, this horn possessed

eyes like human eyes, and a mouth uttering great boasts.

† Daniel never calls the little horn "antichrist." That title has been supplied by later interpretation, not by the inspired text itself.

† Just as Revelation never identifies the beast as antichrist, Daniel never identifies the little horn as antichrist. Each figure should first be understood within its own prophecy. (Daniel 7:15-28)

† One of the safest principles of Bible study is to let Scripture define its own terms. Since John is the only biblical writer to use the word antichrist, John's definition should govern our understanding instead of later theological assumptions. (1 John 2:22; Acts 17:11)

Historical References

† Irenaeus acknowledged that John's letters identify antichrist in connection with those denying Christ, although later writers increasingly connected various prophetic figures into a single future individual.

† Eusebius records the widespread first-century struggles against false teachers who denied the truth concerning Jesus Christ and troubled the early churches.

† Josephus describes the turbulent events leading to Jerusalem's destruction, confirming the first-century setting in which the apostles warned believers of deception and apostasy.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We should never allow popular theology to redefine words that Scripture has already defined. (1 John 2:22)

† Every doctrine should begin with the actual biblical text instead of tradition. (Acts 17:11)

† When we let Scripture interpret Scripture, confusion gives way to clarity and confidence in God's Word. (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17)

Q & A Appendix

Q: Where is the word antichrist found in the Bible?

A: Only in 1 John 2:18, 22; 1 John 4:3; and 2 John 7.

Q: Does the Bible ever call the man of sin "the antichrist"?

A: No. Paul never uses the word antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2. That connection is an interpretation, not an explicit biblical statement. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

Q: How does John define antichrist?

A: John defines antichrist as those who deny that Jesus is the Christ, deny the Father and the Son, and refuse to confess Jesus Christ. (1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7)

Q: Were there many antichrists or only one?

A: John specifically says many antichrists had already arisen during his own lifetime. (1 John 2:18)

Q: Why do many futurists teach that the antichrist, the beast, the man of sin, the little horn, and other prophetic figures are all the same individual?

A: Because their theological system combines separate prophecies into one future end-times figure. However, the Bible never explicitly identifies the beast as the antichrist, never calls

the man of sin the antichrist, and never calls the little horn the antichrist. The only writer who uses the word antichrist is John, and he defines it as those who denied that Jesus is the Christ and says there were already "many antichrists" in his own day. Sound interpretation allows each passage to speak in its own context before drawing comparisons. (1 John 2:18, 22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15)

Q: Is the beast in Revelation ever called the antichrist?

A: No. The word antichrist never appears anywhere in Revelation. John describes the beast in detail, but he never identifies the beast as the antichrist. When John defines antichrist, he does so only in 1 John and 2 John. (1 John 2:18, 22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7; Revelation 13:1-18)

This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies. †

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Source Index

† 1 John 2:18-23; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 7, 9; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Matthew 24:24; Acts 20:29-30; Revelation 13:1-2; Daniel 7:8

† Historical Writers: Josephus, Irenaeus, Eusebius

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