



Biblical Misconceptions: The Antichrist

When I was in high school a friend of mine introduced me to Chick publications, one of which dealt with the rise of the “antichrist” and the persecution of Christians. There were scenes of believers being hunted down and decapitated by a mobile guillotine for not having the mark of the beast on their hands or foreheads. In more recent years writers such as Frank Peretti and Tim LaHaye have written books concerning the rise of this figure. These stories have been made into movies, comic books and even video games that can be played on one’s computer. The “**Left behind**” series is frightening to some and no doubt makes for good entertainment. This is another of the Biblical misconceptions that have arisen over the years. I have heard stories of the proposed identity of the antichrist. During World War II, Adolf Hitler was seen as the antichrist and later this was transferred to the cold war figures of Stalin and Khrushchev as the United States sought to stem the spread of communism in the world. In the early seventies, as peace talks to end the Vietnam war were underway, I knew several individuals who used a mathematical formula to transliterate the name of Henry Kissinger into Hebrew letters and then to numeric values to arrive at the number 666. We will talk about this number next week in more detail, but we must turn to the scriptures to find why this is not the case and why there is no single individual that will be known as the antichrist. The most direct, and simplest way to understand this is to take a look at the appearance of the term in the scriptures. The term “antichrist” appears five times in the scriptures and all in the writings of John. First of all we find that there would be “**many antichrists**” not a single individual. John states, “**...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). Secondly, the antichrist does not denote a person necessarily but a “**spirit**”. This must be understood in the context of what John tells us. “**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). The spirit of “antichrist” was therefore present in the world at the time of John’s writing. Simply stated, this is the spirit of deception which denies the Christ. How is this done? Any doctrine that cannot be supported by scripture partakes of the “spirit” of antichrist. It may involve false teaching and denial of Christ as the son of God in part or in whole. The world is filled with this type of thinking as we look at the religious world and the way in which it is divided. This of course is the working of Satan who seeks to blind the minds of humans so that they cannot see the gospel truth and be saved (2 Cor 4.4). The weakness of the human mind and spirit which will not submit to the authority and teachings of God helps to further this spirit. Paul tells us that if we do not open our minds to the truth God will “**...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 2.11-12). This is due to the nature of falsehood, or as Paul states, “**all deceivableness of unrighteousness**” (2 Thess 2.10). Christ warned of this very thing when he stated that false Christs and prophets would arise (Matt 24.24). Christ states that these would show great signs and wonders in order to deceive. We have a weapon against deception and that is 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 are faithful (Rev 2.10). Evil rulers and powers will come and go, that is the history of the world, and mankind. The gospel will be mistaught, ignored and denied. This is antichrist. Not some world ruler.