

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons
407 - The Antichrist & New World Order

1. Introduction

In every great story there's a villain. And the Bible is no exception. From the beginning, Satan has worked to discredit, corrupt and undermine the integrity and credibility of God while captivating the souls of humanity. The story of the end times wouldn't be complete without the appearance of a satanic superpower led by a charismatic ruler who's literally Hell bent on challenging God and destroying creation.

2. The looming shadow

The end times are characterized in the minds of some as an era in which Satan will bring a plan about to seize political power and capture the minds of humanity. There are those who see the Devil as the antithesis of God, a negative force representing an equal but polar opposite to Jehovah. Others view the Bible and the story of such a malevolent being as the mythic expression of forces that naturally balance the reality of the universe. For many Satan is a fallen angel who led a rebellion against God, fought against the Lord's angelic armies and was thrown out of Heaven. And there are passages that seem to reinforce that idea.

In a popularized biblical media there are stories of Satan's attempt to mimic the appearance of the Messiah, Christ, in the world. In those scenarios the evil one is able to spawn a prodigy who grows, learns and rises to power. This individual marshals the forces of mass media and propaganda to gain power and unite the world under a single government. Only when it's too late does the unexpected world begin to see the true nature of their benefactor. Evil grows in the world, Christians are hunted and executed. The Bible is made illegal and family members, friends and coworkers are encouraged to betray those who still cling to the Bible and God.

This figure becomes identified as the Antichrist and demands that those who wish to remain in his favor receive a mark in their forehead or right hand. Those who refuse are subjected to arrest, torture and death. A specific number, 666, is used as an identifier. A number that has become synonymous with darkness, evil and Satan himself. The characterization of this figure is based on a number of scriptures that are combined to complete this composite. But is it accurate?

In this lesson we'll discuss

- a. The origin of the idea of the Antichrist
- b. What the Bible says about antichrist
- c. The mark of the beast
- d. The Antichrist and the new world order

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Let's take a look at each of these.

3. The origin of the idea of the Antichrist

The figure that becomes identified as the Antichrist is based on descriptions from the book of Revelation. Beginning in chapter twelve we see a struggle taking place that includes a Great Red Dragon (**Rev 12.3-17**). This dragon is identified as Satan a few verses later (**Rev 12.9**), who, after a war in Heaven (**Rev 12.7-8**) is cast out of Heaven then turns to attack those who serve God in the world (**Rev 12.17**).

As chapter thirteen opens, the scene shifts. We see a beast with seven heads and ten horns rise out of the sea and has the name of blasphemy (**Rev 13.1-2**). This beast is empowered by the dragon, Satan, and survives even after one of its heads is wounded (**Rev 13.3**). People are in awe of this beast and worship it, amazed that it survived the deadly wound inflicted on it. The populace however is unaware that they're actually worshiping Satan, who is the source of the beast's power (**Rev 13.4**). This beast then makes war with the saints, Christians, as it continues to grow in power and influence the masses (**Rev 13.5-9**).

The scene shifts again and we see another beast rising out of the earth. This beast is described as having two horns like a lamb but speaks as a dragon (**Rev 13.11**). The imagery seems to imply that the first beast, that from the sea, has faded but the beast from the earth directs attention to the first so that it's still worshiped (**Rev 13.11-12**). This beast is also being empowered by Satan and is able to perform signs and wonders to deceive people (**Rev 13.13-14**).

The beast from the earth, empowered by Satan like the first, influences people to create an "*image*" of the first beast. The command is then given that any who will not worship the first beast is to die and those who worship the beast must receive a mark in their right hand or foreheads (**Rev 13.15-17**).

Immediately following this we have an identity given to the beast. "*Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*" (**Rev 13.18**). Now let's take a minute and summarize what we know about this beast - identified as a man - who becomes known as the Antichrist.

- a. Satan seeks to destroy followers of God in the world
- b. A beast empowered by Satan rises that blasphemes God
- c. This beast has a wound that blunts its power
- d. A second beast rises to champion the first beast
- e. The second beast deceives the world
- f. The beast commands that people receive a mark

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g. The beast is identified as a man with the number 666

We'll talk about some of this in a moment and compare some of these ideas to what the Bible says, but there are important points we need to take note of. The first is that these descriptions are contained in the book of Revelation. Revelation was a letter specifically written to seven churches in Asia Minor. The book is conveyed in apocalyptic or highly figurative language containing signs and symbols. The events in the book are to take place "*shortly*", which we talked about in the last lesson. John later is told that the prophecies are not to be sealed, or hidden, since the time was "*at hand*".

As the book progresses there are statements and descriptions interpreted as marking the last days or end times. In previous lessons I've pointed out that we're living in the last days, and have been since Christ came into the world, and there will be no sign to warn us of Christ's return. If we interpret the events recorded in Revelation chapter thirteen and onward as being a progressive statement describing events at the end of time, we create conflicts with everything we've learned about the second coming. That fact doesn't sit well with a lot of people who view Revelation as a window looking at the end of the world.

A problem we face when discussing the book of Revelation is the idea that figures and symbols in the letter are to be interpreted literally. The literal interpretive approach to the signs and symbols in the book therefore presents us with a problem in harmonizing Revelation with the rest of the scriptures. Images expressed in the apocalyptic language are hyperbolic in nature and contain images from the Law of Moses, the Tabernacle, Temple, the Old Testament prophets and symbols used by God throughout the scriptures. As I've stated before, this is how God signs his work. The similarity in images, symbols and expressions doesn't make the book an extension of the Old Testament prophets, it validates the fact that God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, is the author of the writing, with John acting as the recorder.

It's always interesting to me that Genesis, the first book in the Bible, written about literal events, is interpreted as being symbolic, due to the lifespans of the early patriarchs and the story of the flood among others, while Revelation, the last book in the Bible, written in symbolic language, is interpreted literally in many areas. Both of these perspectives create problems in harmonizing the scriptures.

This isn't a study of the book of Revelation, but I believe there are some things we can identify here that will help us understand more about this figure of the beast, or man. The context of the book is first a message to the seven churches of Asia from Christ. An underlying theme of the messages is that they'll be persecuted but need to remain faithful. Another theme in these messages is that in some places the truth was being compromised. False teaching and ungodly practices were at work and these were condemned. The representation of the beast from the sea is in line with an image of the oppressing power, the Roman empire. There are identifiers later in

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the book that provides enough information to validate that conclusion. The problem lies in understanding the beast from the earth, later identified as a man, further identified by the number 666. That has more to do with one of the themes to the churches and that theme is a subtle undercurrent in the rest of the book. We'll touch on that as we now take a look at what the scriptures have to say about this idea of the Antichrist.

4. What the Bible says about antichrist

Who are we talking about when we read about the beast in Revelation thirteen? The letter doesn't mention a name or title. There are descriptions of this figure that we can draw from that point to spiritual opposition to the Gospel, Christ and God and expresses that opposition by persecuting the church. So where do we get the name Antichrist from?

John, the writer of Revelation, is the only inspired writer to use the term antichrist. The term doesn't appear in the book of Revelation and it's not applied to the beast / man in chapter thirteen leading us to ask the question again; Where does the name come from?

John, who wrote one of the Gospel accounts as well as the book of Revelation, also wrote three letters that appear to address gnostic ideas circulating among the churches . 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 goes on to identify an important characteristic of the antichrists. “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” (1 John 2.22).*

Later in the letter John writes, *“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).* Ideas circulating in the first century by the gnostics, and that pop up in various forms today, include the notion that Christ couldn't have been God because God would not be able to come in contact with sinful beings such as we. Others taught that Christ was only a spirit, not a physical person, while in the world appearing as some sort of projection or hologram. Errors and strange practices were being introduced related to these ideas that John addresses.

So what does this tell us? From these passages we're able to gather a lot of information.

- a. Antichrist is a spirit of opposition to the truth
- b. There were many antichrists - not just one
- c. They were already present in the world at the time of John's writing
- d. The presence of the spirit of antichrist confirmed we're in the last days

So, the figure that we read about in the book of Revelation isn't the emergence of the

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spirit of the antichrist. Anyone who opposes the identity of Christ or denies the Gospel is in essence an antichrist. The spirit of opposition to the Gospel has been alive and well since the church was established and will continue to thrive because that's how humans are. The beast of Revelation thirteen is a powerful figure and one that represents the influence of Satan, but he's not **The Antichrist** and if he's not the antichrist, then other ideas about this figure have to be tempered with what the scriptures teach.

Although we can't identify the beast of Revelation as a singular antichrist we're given two pieces of information that do help us understand this figure and his characteristics.

5. The mark of the beast

The two pieces of information that we have that I believe helps us understand the identity of the beast in Revelation thirteen are:

- a. A mark in the right hand or forehead representing worship
- b. The number of the man - 666

I could do an entire lesson on ideas about the mark of the beast. Years ago when barcodes were introduced and UPC labels began to appear on products I remember people rejecting this technology as a sign of the coming of the Antichrist, the one world government and control of the population. More recently we've seen vaccines and forced vaccinations interpreted as a mark of the beast. Other things have been suggested, feared, fought against and sometimes violence has erupted between groups over this issue. If we review the overall context of the writing we understand that two factors will help us with that. One is the time period the book was written in and the second is a reminder that these things were to "*shortly*" come to pass.

The mark of the beast I believe represents two things. One a physical reality that became a practice of the Romans and the second is a representation of what we choose to believe in and what we choose to reject.

Christians began to grow and as they did were perceived as a threat to the Jews traditions rooted in the Law of Moses. They were a threat to pagans as well since they represented blasphemy against the gods. There was also a monetary aspect to this as well as recorded by Luke. While at Ephesus, an uprising began led by Demetrius a silversmith. At stake for these pagans was their trade of creating images of the goddess Diana. Such a disturbance arose that concern was raised about being held accountable for what was going on (**Acts 19.23-41**).

From the Roman perspective Christians represented a threat to their way of life and in some instances rejection of the emperor. For Greeks and Romans alike their way of life was under attack by this radical idea. Failure to recognize the "imperial cult" or veneration of the

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gods of Rome by either Jews or Christians was an offense that carried severe penalties at times and was a source of friction between the Romans and both Jews and Greeks. Some emperors required everyone to confirm their support of the gods and/or the emperor by offering incense to the gods or later an image of the emperor. Later, during the reign of some of the emperors such as Decius in the mid third century, a certificate was issued confirming that an offering to the gods or emperor had been made. Lack of this certificate could result in arrest, imprisonment and even death.

The second way we can look at this mark of the beast has to do with the identity provided by John. That of course is the dreaded 666. I've discussed this in more detail in my lesson on The Numbers Of God. The number 666 has come to denote Satanism, evil, darkness and is feared by some who are more superstitious. Once again, treating the number as the symbol I believe it to be, we can find a more practical interpretation.

I've already mentioned that God utilizes various numbers and symbols to represent his work and power. These elements appear throughout the scriptures and serve to connect it as a cohesive unit. The number seven is one that stands out. Seven represents the work of God, his power and the completeness of what he does. Christ is identified as having the seven spirits of God (**Isa 11.2, Rev 1.4 & 3.1**). Seven represents perfection, completed revelation and the work of the Lord.

The figure of the beast, identified as a man having the number 666, carries spiritual significance. There is a power, one that has been influenced by Satan to destroy Christians that will receive a wound and amaze the world when it survives. That beast was eventually replaced by another who mimicked the power and influence of the first. This beast, that associated with the idea of the Antichrist, is one who represents himself as a power of God. We can take a look at the representation of the number to see this more clearly.

Two elements are at work here. The first is the number six as I noted. The second is the number three. In the scriptures the number three is used to represent the godhead consisting of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. The number three appears in other places as well and serves to represent God's identity, judgment and work. In Revelation we have the number 6, which is close to God's symbol for completion and his power in the number 7, and it's repeated three times. It brings to mind the idea of God's perfection or completeness in his work and authority and repeating the number three times reinforces the concept that this is a work of the Lord. In other words - this is something that will have the ability to perform great things, advertise itself as the power of God, and fool the masses. The beast in Revelation thirteen I believe is in line with statements made by Paul about a coming apostasy (**2 Thess 2.3-10**).

That might sound a bit off the wall at first but consider this. The book was written to seven churches located in Asia Minor. This was a region that received the Gospel earlier than

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regions to the West. We have the underlying theme of faithfulness and warnings against error in the messages to the churches. As we trace the history of the Christian church we can see that early changes to the structure, operation and doctrine of the church began in this region. Asia Minor, which would include the seven churches identified by John, was a crossroads of cultures and influences. The gnostic influences that appear to have originated in the Indus valley coupled with Jewish mysticism and the pressure of Judaizing teachers had an effect on the church. The great apostasy didn't begin with the church in Rome - it started in Asia Minor and these churches were at ground zero. The idea of 666 appears to imply that an individual, or series of individuals, would arise proclaiming themselves as the representative of God when fact they're spreading doctrines that will condemn their followers to Hell.

6. The Antichrist and the new world order

World events and political figures have become subjects of interpretation and application to the end times. Adolf Hitler, Nikita Krushchev and others were believed by some to be the Antichrist. When their regimes fell or they faded from the world stage, silence ensued. Over time other figures were selected as projections and explanations were offered claiming that the Antichrist had been identified and the end times were upon us.

During the Vietnam war as the Paris peace talks were being held, I knew people who were trying to prove that Henry Kissinger was the Antichrist. His name was transliterated into Hebrew characters, assigned numeric values for each of the letters to which a formula was applied in order to reach a total of 666. Mr. Kissinger completed his work at the time and then moved on.

In January of 1991, the United States and it's allies launched operation Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. During the brief conflict there were those who proposed that Saddam was the Antichrist and the battle for Kuwait was part of a larger conflict leading to the battle of Armageddon, which we'll talk about in another lesson. When the fighting stopped and reconstruction began, some revised their views on Saddam's role in relation to biblical prophecy and the end times. I even heard one televangelist actually lament that God had tried to bring about the final battle but that didn't work out and the Lord would try again. This person had a national following and I had to shake my head in disbelief when I heard the remark. We'll talk about that idea in another lesson. The bottom line is that Saddam Hussein wasn't the Antichrist nor were any of the other figures that have been selected as candidates for the fulfillment of prophecy.

World history has shown that there will be leaders who rise and attempt to control as many people and as much global real estate as possible. Ancient empires confirm that. The history of the twentieth century shows the attempt to dominate the globe, first by the Axis powers led by Nazi Germany, and later designs to impose communism on the world by Secretary

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Kruschev, chairman Mao and the list goes on. Others have also tried, and there will be more attempts to accomplish that in the future. There may even be a consolidation of power over a majority of the world's population but that's a reflection of what humans are capable of. During the first century, the Roman empire exerted that control over the Western world and went unchecked until God rendered judgment against them for their evil.

The Antichrist is an office, an influence and the new world order that some believe will enslave humanity isn't what John is speaking of in the book of Revelation. There's a far more subtle evil that has greater consequences that rose during that time, and, according to the scriptures, will continue to deceive the world until Christ does return - without warning.

Another point that has to be brought out as we reach the end of this lesson is the fact that predictions of a charismatic leader who will achieve control of the global community and oppose God by persecuting Christians will fail. They'll fail as surely as predictions of Christ's return. Forecasts of the second coming will fail because Christ stated we can't know when that will happen. Predictions concerning the rise of an Antichrist will fail because the prophecies are misunderstood, misinterpreted and misapplied. I have books in my library written by Premillennialists who caution about making these predictions. As predictions are made, time passes and they don't come about, the result is the world will view Bible believers as misguided and ignorant people who can't figure their own scriptures out.

The Antichrist is a spirit of error and unbelief. It's not only present in the world today but it's been here since the first century. This spirit of error and unbelief will continue to deceive, mislead and ultimately cost people their souls. The answer to that is to understand the scriptures as God intends and the mistaken ideas will be resolved in light of the truth.

7. Next

The kingdom of the Antichrist is viewed as holding the world in a grip of evil. Bibles are destroyed and banned, believers are persecuted and killed. The world tips toward chaos and the judgments of God begin. As the power of evil grows and hope in the world wanes a final conflict will decide the fate of the Earth as the forces of good and evil gather for **The Battle Of Armageddon**.