

Antichrist

Louis Garbi

Anything in opposition is anti-. Therefore, anyone against Christ is antichrist. Or is this the case? One might pose this statement from Jesus: *“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad”* (**Matthew 12:30**). It would seem to indicate that every unbeliever is antichrist. This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible gives the term a narrow definition, a definition not extending to the lost at large.

“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**).

There are three items in the above passage which narrow down our perspective of antichrist: (1) *“the last hour;”* (2) *“they were not of us;”* (3) *“they went out from us.”*

- *“The last hour”* indicates a specified time. In this case, John pointed out a problem peculiar to the last days, the time of the gospel preached to all nations.
- *“They were not of us”* defines the spirit of antichrist. They did not have fellowship with the apostles – those of whom it is written; *“that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ”* (**1 John 1:3**).
- *“They went out from us.”* These were people who had association with the apostles of Jesus Christ or their teaching. These would have had some identification with Jesus. They had the potential to “continue.” This points to an active departure in contrast to being faint hearted, being discouraged, or being weak in faith.

Therefore, antichrist describes a people discontent with and disconnected from the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, who make their own rules, and present to the world a counterfeit Jesus made after their own image by counterfeit teaching. John did not make a dry observation about antichrist. It carries a strong note of warning through the book.

Why didn’t the apostles stop them? The apostles were never given power to force conformity to themselves. The whole service to God in this new covenant rests on the individual’s faith and submission to God. The church has no jail, fine, or other means to coerce souls. We cannot materially bind people to ourselves and still belong to Christ. Therefore, men are at liberty to demonstrate their ideas, even to the detriment of themselves and those they affect. Such was written by Paul, an apostle *“born out of due season.”*

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant” (**1 Corinthians 14:37-38**).

Though the apostles could not coerce conformity to Christ they, through the Holy Spirit, did identify the characteristics of antichrist so that we are warned and can avoid them. The following passages of scripture are only a few examples:

- **Matthew 7:15**, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”*
- **John 10:1**, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.”*

- **Acts 20:29-30**, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”
- **2 Corinthians 11:13-15**, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”
- **2 Tim. 4:3-4**, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”
- **3 John 1:9**, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.”
- **Jude 1:16**, “These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.”

It is necessary for the follower of Jesus to judge what is taught about Him. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (**1 John 4:1**). We test the spirits by using the standard of the Bible. We must hold to what was written by the apostles and prophets of Jesus Christ. Consider the lesson of the man of God who took refreshment from a lying prophet. Contrary to God’s command that forbade eating or drinking during the journey home, the prophet lied to the man of God: “I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water’” (**1 Kings 13:18**). The man of God did not follow God’s command and paid with his life, even though the contradiction seemed to come from a reputable source.

John wrote that there were “many antichrists” (**1 John 2:18**). This indicates a wide variety of deceptive teachings and practices concerning Jesus Christ. When John emphasized “the antichrist”, he pointed to the leading example. Paul described this:

“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**).

What did this falling away produce? It produced a religious system that murdered and tortured, amassed land, infused idolatry (statuary and art representing beings from the Bible), promoted itself as the sole representative of Christ, ruled over nations, etc. We might be aghast at the cruelty of radical Islam, but theirs is a small thing compared to the blasphemy of those who used the name of Jesus as an excuse for power. Antichrist.

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities” (**Revelation 18:4-5**).