

UPWARD CALL

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God

IN KING JESUS.

(Philippians 3:13-14)

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Antichrist

For years, many Christians have been looking for an antichrist to arise and diabolically rule the world. Of course, the same ones are generally looking for the Jews to rebuild a temple and begin animal sacrifices, along with a three and a half or seven-year tribulation, which all Christians will escape from because they will be raptured out of here to heaven. Christians will be saying "to hell with earth" as they fly off to heaven in their gospel ship. Well, I exaggerate; I don't believe they will be saying this, but some pulpитеers preach along this line with great glee and excitement. As for a rebuilt temple and animal sacrifices, have they not read Hebrews 10:29 about trampling underfoot the Son of God, regarding as unclean the blood of the (new) covenant? This leads to the subject of the antichrist.

In scripture, the word *antichrist* is used only five times, and all by John in two of his epistles. This word is made up of the Greek words *anti* [G473] and *christos* [G5547]. *Anti* is defined as "opposite, instead of, because of," meaning the subject is replacing or taking the place of something. Thus, in Matthew 20:28, Jesus gave His life a ransom for [*anti*] many, and in Matthew 2:22, Archelaus was reigning in the place of [*anti*] his father Herod. *Christos* is defined as "anointed" and, as we know, is the title associated most with Jesus the Anointed One.

Given these definitions, *antichrist* simply means one who is in the place of Christ. In a sense, such a one does not necessarily have to take an outward stand against Christ, as if to declare, *I am against Christ*. All one has to do is be in the place reserved or designated for the true Christ or deny that Christ has a place at all or believe that He is not who He says He is. John, the beloved apostle, clearly makes all these points in warning of antichrists.

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. ... Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the *antichrist*, the one who denies the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:18, 22 NASB)

And *every spirit* that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is *the spirit of the antichrist*, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. (1 John 4:3 NASB)

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*. (2 John 1:7 NASB)

First, John refers to antichrist in the singular and plural and as a spirit. Many deceivers have gone out into the world and these are antichrists. Liars and spirits can be antichrists. Second, John defines *antichrist* as one that denies and does not confess Jesus is the Christ, does not acknowledge Jesus as coming in the flesh, and denies the Father and the Son. Such a one is a liar and a deceiver, having the spirit of antichrist.

This raises the question of who John referred to as antichrists. Were they Jews, gnostics, or both? Jesus had warned His disciples that many false Christs and prophets would arise, especially in a time(s) of great tribulation in order to lead many astray, so John was very much on the lookout for this danger (Matthew 24:24).

In his commentary on 1 John, the famous British theologian Robert Govett (1813-1901) stated that the antichrists were the gnostics and argued that they were not the Jews; however, in quoting Irenaeus, he referred to a Jew named Cerinthus as an example of a gnostic. Irenaeus, one of the early church fathers and apologists of the second century, wrote against the heresy of gnosticism which was seriously threatening the church. In *Against Heresies* (Book 1, Chapter 26), Irenaeus wrote about the doctrine of the gnostic Cerinthus, a Jew by race and religion and possibly a contemporary of John the apostle. Clearly, Cerinthus made Jesus and Christ into two separate beings,

thus denying that Christ came in the flesh and that Jesus is the Christ. Irenaeus wrote: *Cerinthus, again, a man who was educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians, taught that the world was not made by the primary God, but by a certain Power far separated from him, and at a distance from that Principality who is supreme over the universe, and ignorant of him who is above all. He represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men. Moreover, after his baptism, Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler, and that then he proclaimed the unknown Father, and performed miracles. But at last Christ departed from Jesus, and that then Jesus suffered and rose again, while Christ remained impassible, inasmuch as he was a spiritual being.*

However, did John exclude the Jews from his warning about antichrists? Govett argues that since John said *they went out from us and were not of us* (1 John 2:19), the Jews have to be excluded because they were not part of the church. This is not supported by logic. John was of the Jews and he was in the church. Besides, not everyone that claimed to be in the church was a true believer or a true Jew, for that matter, much like it is in our own day. Anyone could and still does falsely identify with the church, and these same ones could and do leave at any time for they were/are not one of us. In John's *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Jesus tells us who the liars are. To the conquerors (overcomers), Jesus said:

'I know ... the blasphemy by those who say they are *Jews* and are not, but are *a synagogue of Satan*. 'Behold, I will cause those of *the synagogue of Satan*, who say that they are *Jews and are not, but lie...* (Revelation 2:9; 3:9 NASB)

Of the Jews who rejected Him, Jesus said, *You are of your father, the devil* (John 8:44). Paul adds to our understanding by clearly defining a false Jew (apparent Jew; a liar) and a true Jew (hidden, of the heart).

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly [for not that which is apparent is the Jew], nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly [hidden]; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.... (Romans 2:28-29 NASB [CVL])

Ignatius (30-107 AD), another contemporary of John, wrote in his epistles to the *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians*: *It is absurd to speak of Jesus Christ with the tongue, and to cherish in the mind a Judaism which has now come to an end. For where there is Christianity there cannot be Judaism. ... If anyone preaches the one God of the law and the prophets, but denies Christ to be the Son of God, he is a liar, even as also is his father the devil, and is a Jew falsely so-called, being possessed of mere carnal circumcision.*

It seems just as plausible that John saw the antichrists as those who called themselves *Jews* and claimed to worship the Father while rejecting His Son as the Christ (Messiah). Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father. It is as simple as that! The Jewish leadership in John's day had not only rejected Christ as king (*We have no king*) but had usurped His throne as they ruled over the people, keeping them from entering the kingdom of God. As Jesus said: *They have seated themselves in the chair of Moses* (Matthew 23:2).

The point that I am driving toward is this: John said that *from this* [i.e., many antichrists] *we know that it is the last hour*. Do we see the spirit of antichrist in our day? Are there Christians practicing a blend of Judaism and Christianity? Is Christian Zionism strong among evangelicals? Has the Catholic church declared the Jews have a special relationship (covenant) with God outside of Jesus Christ? The answer to all these questions is yes.

Dear people, it is time to wake up. There is only one way to the Father, and it is through His Son, the Lord Jesus. It matters not whether a singular Jewish antichrist arrives on the scene or not, for the spirit of antichrist is alive and well. By this we know that it is the last hour! John saw it in his day. How much more do we see it in our day? Let us cast out the bondwoman and her son (Galatians 4:30). Let us embrace the only begotten Son of God! Let us love the apparent Jews by telling them the truth, and let us turn from Christian Zionism and any blended form of Judaism. We are not a hybrid. We are a new creation, a one new man under a new covenant in King Jesus!