

The Antichrist in Prophecy

By Randall Price

The designation "Antichrist," appearing only in the epistles of John (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7), is made up of the Greek words *anti* ("against, in place of") and *christos* ("Christ"), and indicates any agent of the evil one (Satan) who acts contrary to or as a counterfeit of God's Anointed who is destined to rule the world in the end time (Psalm 2:2, 6-8; 110:1-2; Isaiah 9:6-7, et. al.). The use of both the singular ("antichrist") and plural ("antichrists") in 1 John 2:18 allows for both a concentrated and comprehensive expression such as in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 13:1-14) where an eschatological duo of antichrists are distinguished as the "first Beast" (*the* Antichrist) and the "second beast" (the false prophet), who with the "dragon" (Satan) as the origin of their "power" (authority), form a counterfeit trinity (Revelation 13:1-2, 11). According to 1 John 4:3 the comprehensive form of "antichrist" is found in the anti-theocratic and anti-Semitic spirit that characterizes the present age and indicates that this is "the last hour" (Last Days) in which the Antichrist is predicted to arise (1 John 2:18; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 6-8). Despite the isolated use of the term Antichrist, the Bible is filled with descriptive terminology of the diabolical and desecrating nature of this future opponent of God and His saints. Among the more obvious epithets in Scripture are: "the little horn" (Daniel 7:8), "the insolent king" (Daniel 8:23), "the prince who is to come" (Daniel 9:26), "the one who makes desolate" (Daniel 9:27), "the despicable person" (Daniel 11:21), "the strong-willed king" (Daniel 11:36), "the worthless shepherd" (Zechariah 11:16-17), "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:3), "the son of destruction" (2 Thessalonians 2:3); "the lawless one" (2 Thessalonians 2:8), "the beast" (Revelation 11:7; 13:1; 14:9; 15:2; 16:2; 17:3, 13; 19:20; 20:10). Only the futurist school (which includes premillennialism) has been able to develop a self-consistent interpretation of the Antichrist concept from the scriptural witness of the two testaments.

Antichrist in the Old Testament

The statement in John's epistle that his audience had "heard that Antichrist was coming" (1 John 2:18) encourages an examination of the Old Testament text for proleptic imagery that suggests this eschatological figure. In the Old Testament this ultimate Antichrist is progressively revealed through a series of human "antichrists" that appear as opponents of the Jewish People, and especially as desecrators of Jerusalem and/or the holy Temple. Antichrist allusions usually take the form of a human being (usually a monarch or military commander) set in direct opposition to God. In this position the human personality often takes on super-human proportions by virtue of the divine/human contest, and as such, serves as a pre-figurement or type of the eschatological Antichrist who will seek to usurp divine worship. Types of the Antichrist revealed during the biblical period are: (1) the serpent in Eden who deceived man and sought to corrupt the divine order (Genesis 3), (2) Nimrod, the blasphemous ruler who sought to usurp divine worship (Genesis 10:8; 11:1-9), (3) Amalek, the son of Esau (Genesis 36: 12, 16) whose descendants opposed Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 17:8-16; Deuteronomy 25:19; 1 Samuel 15:2-3), (4) Balaam, the foreign prophet who opposed Israel (Num. 22-24), (5) the Pharaoh of the Exodus, who oppressed the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 1:11, 22; 5:2) and was unnamed in Scripture, perhaps to emphasize his role as a divine adversary, (6) the Assyrian king

Sennacherib, who oppressed the Northern Kingdom and arrogantly sought to capture Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:13-19:37), and (7) the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, persecuted Israel in exile, and usurped divine prerogative [sovereignty] (2 Kings 24:13-14; Daniel 4:30).

The most developed typology appears in Daniel's description of the blasphemous ruler whom he designates as "the little horn" who "makes war with the saints" and is destroyed by the "Ancient of Days" (Daniel 7:8, 21), "the wicked and tyrannical king" (Daniel 8:11-14; 11:31), assumed to be Antiochus IV Epiphanes who desecrated the Jewish Temple in 186 B.C., and "the prince that shall come" (Daniel 9:26), probably the Roman general Titus who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. By comparing the more obvious types (the "antichrists") with the antitype (the "Antichrist"), we can observe first, that in every case the type is either a Gentile or one outside the legitimate line of inheritance and second, that there is a progressive development of opposition to God finally centering on the desecration of the Temple. The development of these figures from type to antitype reveals that the movement of the typological antichrist's actions begin with elements of opposition to the divine program, manifested as opposition to God and oppression of God's People, which escalates with each figure toward desecration of the Temple as place where the divine Presence is represented on earth. As Daniel's revelation (Daniel 8:9-25; 11:21-45) of the Antichrist imagery is the last and most highly developed of all the types (embodying all the previously revealed types), and focuses on his abominable desolation of the Holy Place (Daniel 8:11-14; 11:31), it casts the mold for the New Testament's portrayal of the future Antichrist (Daniel 11:36-45; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3; Revelation 13:1-10; 17:11-17), and his end-time Abomination of Desolation in the Tribulation Temple (Daniel 9:27; 12:11; cf. Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Antichrist in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the witnesses to Antichrist are Jesus and the apostles Paul and John. However, this is to be expected since they present the most extensive treatments of eschatology (Olivet Discourse, Thessalonian epistles, and Revelation).

In the Gospels

Jesus assumes the Danielic figure that desecrated the Temple through the Abomination of Desolation will be understood by His future Jewish audience as the Antichrist who will set himself against the Nation and their God (Matthew 24:15/ Mark 13:14). Implied in Jesus' selective description (primarily from Daniel 9:27; cf. 11:36-37) in the Olivet Discourse is the incompatibility of that which is holy with the Antichrist. Whether a holy city, a holy Temple, or a holy (Chosen) People, the Antichrist by his very nature must seek to destroy them all. For this reason the Jewish People living in Jerusalem in the day of Antichrist's power are warned to flee (Matthew 24:16-21/ Mark 13:14b-19). Jesus' statement of the Antichrist's "abomination of desolation" is the signal event that marks the mid-point of the Tribulation. Studies in the chiastic structure of Matthew 24/Mark 13 reveal that the elements corresponding to the first and second half of the Tribulation are arranged with Matthew 24:15/Mark 13:14 as the pivot. Thus, the prophecy of Antichrist is the chronological determinative for the Tribulation, with Antichrist's covenant with the Jewish leaders marking its beginning (Daniel 9:27a), the Temple desecration

its middle (Daniel 9:27b; Matthew 24:15/Mark 13:14a; 2 Thessalonians 2:4), and the Antichrist's destruction its end (Daniel 9:27c; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8).

In Paul

Paul also emphasizes the incompatibility of holiness and ungodliness by contrasting Christ with Antichrist (2 Cor. 6:15-16), though he uses the cognomen "Belial" ("wicked" or "worthless one") familiar from the intertestamental Jewish literature. While some have thought Paul's reference is to Satan, Paul could have easily used the available Greek term *Satanas* ("Satan"). He more likely chose this obscure expression (used only here in the New Testament) because of its apocalyptic usage of Messiah's quasi-human end-time opponent. Furthermore, the context uses Temple imagery (vs. 16) and Paul's command for "separation" in verses 6:17; and 7:1 is "go out of their midst," an escapist tone analogous to Antichrist contexts such as 1 John 10:39: "go out, escape" and Christ's warning to "flee" (Matthew 24:15-16/ Mark 13:14b). If Paul had these ideas in the background, Belial may be a more fitting allusion to the Antichrist than Satan. Paul's more explicit statement concerning the character and activity of Antichrist is in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. The character of the Antichrist is defined in this text as "he who opposes" (vs. 4a), a word in the Greek, which was used by the LXX in 1 Kings 11:25a as a rendering for the Hebrew word *satan* ("adversary"). This points to Antichrist's link with Satan, which verse 9 says more precisely is "in accord with the activity of Satan." Since Satan's adversary is God, and his original goal was to become like God (cf. Isaiah 14:14; Ezek. 28:17), the Antichrist actions are apparently an attempt to fulfill this by usurping worship as God (vs. 4b; cf. Revelation 13:4-8). His counterfeit is apparently of the God of Israel, since in verse 4 he is pictured as one who will exalt himself above every "god or object of worship" (i.e. above all pagan gods) and enthrones himself "in the Temple of God displaying himself as God," the language of theophanic installation (cf. 1 Kings 8:10; 2 Chron. 7:1-3; Ezek. 43:1-7). In this way the Antichrist appears as a rival to Christ, not by an assumption of the messianic role, but as His superior (economically speaking) - as God [the Father]. Note too, that in this passage, the Antichrist usurps the place of God in a blasphemous act of self-deification. This is why Paul uses the descriptive terms "the man of lawlessness" and "the son of destruction" (vs. 3). The word "lawlessness" apparently describes his nature as characterized by his opposition to the Temple as the repository of the Law (vs. 4), while the word "destruction" refers to his destiny, i.e. destined for "destruction" or "perdition" (vs. 8).

Paul seems to connect the "revelation of Christ" (vss. 1-2) with the "revealing of the Antichrist" (vss. 3-4) in such a way as to imply that Christ's return to earth is related to Antichrist rebellion on earth, a cause/effect relationship clearly drawn in Revelation 19:11-20. Because the Antichrist is here said to be "revealed," it has been suggested that his "revelation" is a counterfeit to that of Christ's (vs. 9). From Paul's description of the destruction of the Antichrist at the revelation of Christ (vs. 8), it appears that he identified "the lawless one" with Daniel's "little horn" (Daniel 7:8, 11).

In the Book of Revelation

In the Book of Revelation, the term "Antichrist" does not appear (although John previously used it in his epistles). The reason for this may be partly explained from the symbolic

character of his prophetic vision, for his expression of the Antichrist is "Beast," a term descriptive of his inhuman nature which was often revealed to John in animal form. The Revelation provides the most complete information about the career of the Antichrist, even offering an identification of his person in the cryptogram 666 (13:16-18). Since the text does not give an explanation for this number, other than that it is the "number of a man" (i.e. Antichrist), no one until the appropriate hour in the Tribulation will be able to discern this meaning. John with Paul understands the Antichrist is to be energized by Satan, or in Johannine terminology, "the dragon" (13:2; cf. 12:5). John's picture of the Antichrist is of a world ruler (13:1, 4, 7; 17:12-13, 17) whose political position is so dominating that it encroaches into the religious realm (13:15). This is accomplished for the Antichrist by a diabolical religious figure John presents as a "second beast," who is a lesser antichrist. He is a duplicate of the Antichrist as the "first Beast" (13:12a), but inferior to him, having only "two horns" compared with his ten (13:11b).

In contrast to the first Beast who "arises out of the *sea*," the second beast "comes up out of the *earth*" (13:11a). These contrasting terms are indicative of the origin of the two beasts. "The sea" may symbolize the Gentiles (17:15; cf. Daniel 7:2-3), and if this were the case here, the opposite term "the earth" would symbolize the Jews. There is precedence for the Gentile origin of Antichrist in the Old Testament allusions, and the Jewish identification may be strengthened if here "the earth" has technical sense of "the Land" [of Israel] as it sometimes may in Revelation (11:18; cf. Daniel 8:9). While most premillennial interpreters have accepted the view that the Antichrist's *geographical* origin is in Europe as a revived Roman empire, based on Daniel 9:26 having Rome in the background, a Middle-eastern origin has been proposed, based on Assyria being the "slain" [kingdom] of Revelation 13:3 (cf. Revelation 17:9-11; Daniel 11:40) that is revived as Iraq (Goodman, Hodges).

The "second beast" acts as a lieutenant of the Antichrist in the religious realm, duplicating the miraculous "signs" of the biblical prophets (13:13-14). Just as many "antichrists" appeared during the Last Days to prepare for the Antichrist (1 John 2:18, 22), so many "false prophets and false Christs" will appear throughout the Tribulation (cf. Matthew 24:10, 24) to prepare for the greater deception of the second beast (Revelation 13:13-14) as the superlative "False Prophet" (Revelation 13:14 with Matthew 24:24; cf. Revelation 19:20). He possesses counterfeit, but subordinate, authority like that of the first Beast (13:4, 12), which is why he is called a "second" beast. In this position he promotes the universal worship of the Antichrist (13:16), who will apparently at this time claim the status of deity (Revelation 13:4-8, 12-13). While the False Prophet is said to "deceive" the "earth-dwellers" or Gentiles (Revelation 13:12), he is also shown to perform "signs" which are peculiar to Israel (Revelation 13:12b-15). Because these "signs" include the ability to restore life (vs. 12), call fire down from heaven (vs. 13), and to create (vss. 14b-15), his actions particularly recall those of the Prophet Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 18:36-38; 17:21-23; 17:14-16). This might imply that the False Prophet will, like Elijah (cf. Malachi 3:1-2; 4:5), act as a messianic forerunner proclaiming the Antichrist as Messiah, however, the Antichrist receives worship as a god exalted above all other gods (Revelation 13:4, 8; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:4), so it is more probable that the False Prophet is for Israel also a False Messiah, who performs expected messianic signs (Isaiah 35:5; 42:7; 61:1; cf. Matthew 11:3-5; Luke 4:18-19) to confirm and magnify the supreme status of the Antichrist through their counterfeit god/prophet relationship (John 5:36; 8:54; 10:18; 17:4; cf. Matt, 24:24 with Acts

2:22). This counterfeit messianic status accords with his description as having "horns like a lamb" (probably a counterfeit of the messianic nature, Revelation 5:6; cf. Isaiah 53:7) and speaking as "a dragon" (Satanic empowerment), 13:11.

The two signs performed for/by the Antichrist: resuscitation and presence in the Temple are connected with each other and with messianic expectation. In accordance with messianic expectation of Messiah at the Temple as divine judge (Malachi 3:1-2), Jesus came into the Temple precincts, and acting judicially, overturned the tables of the money-changers (John 2:13-21). After this act the Jewish crowd who had apparently made the messianic connection asked him for a sign. Jesus answered with the sign of resurrection. The Satanic resuscitation of the Antichrist may be an attempt to counterfeit this sign of resurrection (Revelation 13:3, 12-14) as a means to deification and enthronement as divine judge. The Antichrist's role as universal judge and executor may point to this investiture (Revelation 13:8-10, 15). However, the intention of the Antichrist in his persecution of Israel and invasion of the Land (Daniel 11:41; cf. 8:9-13) may be to reverse the demonstration of divine blessing, evident with the 144,000 and the Two Witnesses (Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1-5; 11:3-12), by returning the whole Nation to an exilic (scattered) state. Daniel 9:27 describes the "desolation" that follows the Antichrist's "abomination." This same term is used to depict the condition of Israel and its Land as a result of desecration and exile (cf. Lev. 26:34, 35; Psalm 73: 19; 2 Chron. 30:7; 36:21; Jer. 4:7). This may occur with the worldwide Jewish persecution that follows Antichrist's enthronement in the Temple (12:13-17; cf. Matthew 24:16-22; Mark 13:14b-18).

The defeat of the Antichrist accompanies the Second Advent of Christ (19:1, 19-20a) and apparently takes place in Jerusalem at the final campaign of Armageddon (cf. Zechariah 14:1-4; cf. Daniel 9:27c). The eternal destination of the Antichrist is the Lake of Fire (19:20), designed especially for the punishment of Satan and the rebel angelic (demonic) order (Matthew 25:41) with whom these have joined ranks. The Beast and False Prophet are consigned to the Lake of Fire at the conclusion of the Battle of Armageddon (20:20c), but Satan is bound until the end of the Millennium (20:1-3, 7), at which time he is defeated and he is reunited to his Satanic trinity in eternal condemnation (20:9-10). The sober warning for the present unsaved and those who accept the mark of the Antichrist during the Tribulation is that they will share the eternal destiny of the Antichrist in the Lake of Fire (20:13-15; 21:8).

The Nationality of the Antichrist

Three basic arguments seek to establish the national or ethnic identity of the Antichrist. Three basic arguments seek to establish the national or ethnic identity of the Antichrist. The first is the logical argument. It states that since the Jewish People claim that the definitive way the Messiah will be identified by the Jewish Nation is by his building of the Temple that when the Antichrist makes possible the rebuilding of the Third (Tribulation) Temple, the Jewish People will accept him as the Messiah. Consequently, if the Antichrist is accepted as the Messiah, and the Messiah is Jewish, then the Antichrist must also be of Jewish origin. Would the Jewish People allow a non-Jew to be involved in rebuilding the Jewish Temple? A second argument is the lexical argument, a deduction drawn from the biblical text. In this case evidence of Jewish origin is said to be found in the words of Daniel 11:37 in the King James version: "And he will not regard the God of his fathers ..." Since these verses describe the character of the Antichrist,

and since the term “God of the fathers” is used elsewhere to refer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the Jewish Patriarchs or “fathers”), this must indicate that the Antichrist is an apostate Jew.¹ Finally, the linguistic argument contends that because of the Greek preposition anti in Antichrist, the Antichrist is a counterfeit of Jesus Christ and since He was Jewish, so must be the Antichrist in order to claim this identity.

These arguments, however, need to be scrutinized in light of other scriptural and historical factors. One reason for this, aside from the desire for biblical accuracy, is that this view, to a Jewish person, is tantamount to the blood libel under which generations of Jews were persecuted by Christians. In fact, in the spring of 1999 Dr. Jerry Falwell was accused of anti-Semitism by the American Jewish Committee in New York for holding this view. He quickly became the target of pundits on national television talk shows, political commentary programs, and was widely denounced in newspaper editorials throughout the country.² Few realize the history behind this view that caused such an uproar when made public by a national figure. For instance, one early proponent of this view was the Church Father John Chrysostom (4th century A.D.). He said that the Antichrist would be a Jewish dictator from the cursed tribe of Dan³ and called the Jews inveterate murders, destroyers, men possessed by the devil. The blood libel is based on this idea and claims such things as that the Jews had sold themselves to Satan, that they had grown horns as a result of their pact with the devil, and that they are the architects of a worldwide scheme to enslave the non-Jewish races. Because of the terrible history of anti-Semitism by Christians, it is incumbent for Christians who hold that the Antichrist is Jewish to be sure this case is certain. However, as we examine the arguments above, we will find that it is, in fact, quite doubtful. Let us consider then the arguments one by one.

The Logical Argument

As to the belief that the one who builds the Temple must be the Messiah, neither the Jewish governor Zerubbabel nor the Judean king Herod when rebuilt the Second Temple were thought by the Jewish People to be the Messiah. They understood that interim Temples could be rebuilt at anytime before the final restoration and the erection of the Temple of Ezekiel’s vision. Furthermore, Jews have previously accepted Gentile rulers as Messiahs. One notable modern

¹This was the identification of such conservative, dispensational commentators as J.N. Darby and Arno Gaebelein.

²Dr. Falwell is, in fact, a strong supporter of Israel (see Merrill Simon’s 1984 book *Jerry Falwell and the Jews* and denounces anti-Semitism in any form. He later retracted his statement. However, he also observed that he was simply stating the view of Pretribulational Premillennialism (this was stated on the political commentary program “Crossfire”). This is, at best, a minority view among Pretribulational Premillennialists and is more widely espoused by Replacement theologians.

³The early Church father Hippolytus (*Commentary on the Benedictions of Isaac and Jacob* [Gen. 49:14]) began the Christian tradition that the Antichrist originates from the Israelite tribe of Dan, apparently made this connection from the Jewish *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*T. Dan* 1:4-9; 5:6-7), which states that evil spirits would be active in the tribe (5:5), that “Satan” was “their prince” (5:6), and that they would be hostile in the future to the tribes of Levi and Judah (5:6-7). Support for the view is based on the absence of the mention of the tribe of Dan in the list of tribes in Revelation 7:4-8 from which the 144,000 will be selected. The argument is that Dan must have been left out for a reason and that reason must be because that tribe was cursed (see Genesis 49:17; Deuteronomy 33:22; Jeremiah 8:16) because it was destined to bring forth the Antichrist (Daniel 11:37). However, these verses do not warrant such a supposition and only Daniel 11:37 has any reference to the Antichrist. The Bible does not tell us why Dan was left out, but it is not unusual for names of tribes to be left out of listings for numeral balance (the assumption for the reader is that they are included). Dan, in fact, is included with the tribes that are in the Millennial Kingdom (Ezekiel 48:2), so there apparently was not a curse on the tribe.

example was the French general Napoleon Bonaparte. Another was the Gentile Persian emperor Cyrus who made possible the rebuilding of the Second Temple through his edict and provision of materials and funds (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-11). In fact, the very character of a covenant, such as that in Daniel 9:27, implies that it is with a foreign (Gentile) power, for it is an outsider who has to sign a legal covenant with the Jewish people, not one of their own.

The Lexical Argument

In the case of Daniel 11:37 the translation here could as easily read “the gods of his fathers” as indeed the New American Standard and New International versions do read. Even so, the focus of Daniel 11:36-39 is upon the Antichrist’s usurption of deity and blasphemous actions against the true God. The only “god” he reveres is military power. His attack on the Holy Land, which includes Israel (verse 41) makes it clear that he has no special kinship with the Jews, but intends to control, and ultimately destroy this Nation. These are not usually done to one’s own people. Rather than find factors that would identify the Antichrist with the Jewish People, the description in these verses parallel the description given of a series of historical Gentile persecutors of the Jewish People (Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Titus, Hadrian, and other Roman, Muslim, and European rulers, such as Adolph Hitler, down through the centuries.⁴

The Linguistic Argument

There is nothing in the use of the word “anti” in Antichrist that linguistically requires the Antichrist to be a counterfeit Christ. The word “anti” is a preposition that can have the possible meanings of (1) equivalence - one object set over against another as its equivalent (Matthew 5:38; 1 Corinthians 11:15), (2) exchange - one object opposing or distinct from another, or one object given or taken in return for the other (Romans 12:17; John 1:16), and (3) substitution - one object given or taken instead of the other (Matthew 2:2; Luke 11:11).⁵ While the idea of *replacement* is denoted by these possible meanings, the idea of *counterfeit* is not. It must be derived from the context. But does any context indicate that the purpose or program of the Antichrist is to counterfeit Christ? It is stated that they will be “false Christs” (Matthew 24:23-24), but this does not mean that they seek to imitate *Jesus Christ*. However, the very spirit of the Antichrist is that he rejects and opposes Jesus Christ (1 John 4:3; Revelation 17:14). It is not that he seeks to copy Him, but to conquer Him. In addition, passages such as Rev. 19:19 and Daniel 11:36-39 affirm that the Antichrist will war *against* both Christ *and* the Jewish People. This would be a strange act if he were a Jew seeking to counterfeit the Jewish Messiah.

The fact that the rule of the Antichrist takes place during the period of time known as the “times of the Gentiles”(Luke 21:24) would indicate that this one who is the final ruler of this period and epitomizes domination over Israel would also be a Gentile. It would be contrary to the prophetic sequence revealed in Daniel to have a Jew rise to the status of a world ruler before the appointed time for the Jewish kingdom (Daniel 2:32-45; Romans 11:25). Furthermore, the

⁴For my discussion on the typology of the Antichrist see *In Search of Temple Treasures* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1994), pp. 247-250.

⁵ *Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, s.v. *anti* appendix, by M. J. Harris (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1978), 3:1179.

Antichrist appears as the final ruler of this “times of the Gentiles.” “If this is so,” asks Dr. Arnold Fructenbaum, “how can a Jew be the last ruler at a time when only Gentiles can have the preeminence? To say the Antichrist is to be a Jew would contradict the very nature of the Time of the Gentiles.”⁶ This would especially be expected if the Antichrist leads a European alliance of Gentile nations (Daniel 7:8-24). In fact, in Daniel 2 and 7 all of the Gentile rulers mentioned come from the boundaries of their empires. Why would not the figure of the Antichrist, whose roots appear in the Roman empire (Daniel 9:26) not also be circumscribed by these boundaries? Moreover, the figure of the self-willed king and his actions described in Daniel 11:36-45 have remarkable similarities with the final remnant of the last Gentile kingdom of Daniel 2:42-45, the fourth beast with its little horn in Daniel 7:8, 19-27. These figures attack the God of Israel, the Jewish People, and the saints, and are interpreted as having an identity with the Roman empire. This fits Gentile action and origin better than Jewish. The same period also seems to be described in Revelation 6-19 and the particular event of the desecration of the Temple in Daniel 9:27 is paralleled in Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4.⁷ Furthermore, it would be out of character for a Jew to lead the nations against his own people when the Tribulation is by nature a time of Jewish distress (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 12:1). This period is distinguished by the Gentile nations persecution of the Jewish Nation (especially Jewish believers, Daniel 7:25; Matthew 24:9; Luke 21:12, 17), even though there will clearly be Jewish defection (Matthew 24:10; Luke 21:16) and Jewish false prophets (Matthew 24:11, 23-24; Revelation 13:11-17). In addition, in Revelation 13:1, 11, two different beasts are described as arising respectively from the “sea” and the “earth.” The “sea” is a literary image that often indicates the “Gentile nations” (Daniel 7:2, 3). This would mean that its opposite term here “earth” would refer to the Jews. There is support for this in that the Greek word can be used as a technical expression for the “Land of Israel.” If this is so, then the first beast from the sea, the Antichrist, is Gentile and the second, the false prophet, is Jewish.

Finally, it is not necessary that the Antichrist be considered the Messiah in order for the Temple to be rebuilt because in Orthodox Jewish thinking the obligation to rebuild the Temple rests on the Jewish People not the Messiah. The Jerusalem Talmud, along with many Jewish authorities, holds that the Temple can be rebuilt before the coming of the Messiah, and therefore, that while it could be a means of positive identification, it need not be. While Zechariah 6:12 indicates that Messiah (“the Branch”) will build the Temple, this is the Millennial Temple, and therefore allows for the Third (Tribulation) Temple to be built by someone else.

The Jewish View of the Antichrist

In the final analysis, the Antichrist is not shown in Scripture to be Jewish nor to have been accepted by the Jewish people as Messiah, or even as Anti-Messiah. He is simply regarded by them as another Gentile ruler who, like past Gentile rulers (for example, Cyrus), were instrumental in effecting the conditions whereby the Jewish people could comply with their standing order to rebuild the Temple. For this he will be given no greater acclaim than the previous pagans who were considered unwitting agents of the Almighty (compare Isaiah 44:28;

⁶Arnold Fructenbaum, *The Nationality of the Antichrist* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: American Board of Missions to the Jews, n.d.).

⁷For a complete study of this question see Ed Hindson, *Is the Antichrist Alive and Well?* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1998).

45:4-5). This is in line with Jewish expectation for the future time of rebuilding. From a description of the Land of Israel at the End of Days given by the Jewish Sage Tosafot Yomtov reveals that He writes in his commentary to the Mishnah: "it comes out that until the Davidic Kingdom, our enemies will have a little bit of rule over us, as was in the beginning of the Second Temple period" (*Ma'aser Sheni* 5:2). Temple activist Yirmiyahu Fischer explains that: "Here is where he deals with the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash* ["Temple"] ... and according to this a limited Jewish kingdom, even though not fully independent, is good enough to rebuild the *Beit HaMikdash* ["Temple"], as was the case in the time of Ezra [under Persian rule]."⁸ Therefore, under the covenant of Antichrist the Jewish People will be allowed a greater, though still limited, national sovereignty sufficient to rebuild the Temple and there is no evidence that he will be regarded at this point as having any special religious status. This accords well with the first half of the Tribulation where the Antichrist has not yet "trampled the holy city" (Revelation 11:2) and no miraculous "signs" (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:3, 13-15) to prove his religious status have yet taken place.

One reason that Orthodox Jews will probably reject the Antichrist when he reveals his true identity at the mid-point of the Tribulation is that their own rabbinic literature, as well as their scriptures (Tanach), has prepared them for such a figure. In the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Targum pseudo-Jonathan*, and the later Jewish Apocalyptic *midrashim* (commentaries), a Jewish equivalent of the Antichrist appears by the name of Armilus. Works such as *Sefer Zerubbavel* and those by Saadiah Gaon reveal his characteristics in striking detail. According to these Jewish sources, Armilus will deceive the whole world into believing he is God and will reign over the whole world. He will come with ten kings and together they will fight over Jerusalem. Armilus is expected to persecute and banish Israel to the wilderness and it will be a time of unprecedented distress for Israel; there will be increasing famine, and the Gentiles will expel the Jews from their lands, and they will hide in caves and towers. God will war against the host of Armilus and there will be a great deliverance for Israel and the kingdom of Heaven will spread over all the earth. Other references further describe Armilus as arising from the Roman empire, having miraculous powers, and being born to a stone statue of a virgin, because of which he was called "the son of a stone." It is also interesting that he makes this statue "the chief of all idolatry" with the result that "all the Gentiles will bow down to her, burn incense and pour out libations to her." This resembles Daniel's wicked "king" and "coming prince" and his "abomination of desolation" (Daniel 18:1:31, 36-37), and especially the Apocalypse's statute of the Beast that is brought to life and made an object of worship (Revelation 13:4, 15).

Bibliography

Bousset, W. *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore*. Translated by A. H. Keane (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1896), Renan, Ernst. *Antichrist*. Translated by W. G. Hutchinson (London: W. Scott, Publishers, 1899), Samuel P. Tregelles, *The Man of Sin*. Reprint of the 1840 edition (London/Aylesbury: Hunt, Benard & Co., 1930), Rigaux, Béda. *L'Antéchrist: et l'Opposition au Royaume Messianique dans l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament*. Universitas Catholica Lovaniensis Dissertationes Seires II. Tomus 24 (Paris: J. Gabalda et Fils, 1932), Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994), [Evangelical view]: Arthur W. Pink, *The Antichrist* (Swengel, Pennsylvania: Bible Truth Depot, 1923), J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to*

⁸ Yirmiyahu Fischer, *Mikdash Build* 1:20 (February 14, 1997), p. 7.

Come (Chicago: Moody Press, 1961), pp. 337-339, Walter K. Price, *The Coming Antichrist* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), *In the Final Days* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), David Hocking, *The Coming World Leader* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1988), T. Ice and T. Demy, *The Truth about the Antichrist and His Kingdom. Pocket Prophecy Series* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), Robert Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 2: 149-187, John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), pp. 197-212, [Assyrian view]: Phillip Goodman, *The Assyrian Connection: The Roots of Antichrist and the Emerging Signs of Armageddon* (Lafayette, Louisiana: Prescott Press, 1993), Zane C. Hodges, *Power to Make War: The Career of the Assyrian Who Will Rule the World* (Dallas, Texas: Redención Viva, 1995).

The above article was prepared for *The Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy*. Eds. Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005). Reproduction only by permission of the publisher.