

# The Antichrist Is a **PRESENT REALITY** of Bible prophecy.

1. The scriptures warn of a coming enemy of Christ who will persecute and deceive many.
  - a. Daniel told of a **LITTLE HORN** who would blaspheme God and persecute (Dan 7:23-25).
  - b. Paul said a **MAN OF SIN** would oppose and exalt himself above God (II Thess 2:3-4).
  - c. John wrote of an **ANTICHRIST** who would come as antichrists had come (I John 2:18).
  - d. John described a **WOMAN** and **BEASTS** in Revelation, but these will be studied later.
2. This coming enemy of Christ must be revealed and manifested **BEFORE** Christ returns.
3. The speculations regarding the identity of this coming enemy of Christ have been Legion.
4. There are generally three positions held as to the identity of this enemy of Christ.
  - a. The **PRETERIST** position - all prophecy is fulfilled - points at Nero or Julius Caesar.
  - b. The **FUTURIST** position - all prophecy is future - points at some atheistic "superman."
  - c. The **HISTORICAL** position - prophecy being fulfilled - points at the papacy of Rome.
5. A careful reading of **DANIEL'S** prophecy will introduce this enemy of Christ to us (Dan 7).
  - a. Four kingdoms would exist in succession: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.
  - b. The fourth kingdom - Rome - would develop into ten kingdoms (Dan 7:7, 19-20, 23-24).
  - c. Another kingdom, diverse from the ten, would arise after the ten (Daniel 7:8, 20, 24).
    - (1) The little horn would be **ROMAN**, since it grew from the **FOURTH** beast (Dan 7:7-8).
    - (2) The little horn would develop after Rome was divided into ten kingdoms (Da 7:8,24).
    - (3) The little horn would overthrow three of the Roman kingdoms (Daniel 7:8,20,24).
    - (4) The little horn would be diverse from the ten Roman kingdoms (Daniel 7:24).
    - (5) The little horn would speak great things against the most High (Dan 7:8,11,20,25).
    - (6) The little horn would have the eyes of man and a stout look (Daniel 7:8,20).
    - (7) The little horn would make war with the saints of the most High (Daniel 7:21,25).
    - (8) The little horn would think to change times and laws (Daniel 7:25 cp Daniel 2:21).
    - (9) The little horn would have dominion over the saints for 1260 years (Daniel 7:25).
    - (10) The little horn would lose dominion until Christ destroyed it (Da 7:9-14,21-22,26-27).
6. A careful reading of **JOHN'S** epistles will describe the antichrist character of this enemy.
  - a. John is the only scripture writer that uses the expressions antichrist and antichrists.
  - b. Antichrist. One who claims to be as Christ, but who is actually opposed to Christ.
  - c. John wrote to those who already knew about the coming of antichrist (I John 2:18).
    - (1) Antichrists were those who left the apostolic doctrine and fellowship (I Jn 2:18-19).
    - (2) They were not atheistic political, military, or economic rulers (I John 2:18-19).
    - (3) They were neither Jews, Masons, nor idolaters; they were Christians (I John 2:19).
    - (4) John repeatedly emphasizes doctrinal purity (I John 2:7 etc.; 2:22-26; 4:1-6).
    - (5) Denying the Father and the Son need not require atheism (Titus 1:16; Jude 3-4).

7. A careful analysis of PAUL'S description of this enemy will provide details (II The 2:1-10).
  - a. Specific warning is made against deception deferring the man of sin's coming (2:3).
  - b. The man of sin will be revealed in conjunction with a FALLING AWAY (II Thess 2:3).
    - (1) A falling away is apostasy from the truth (Luke 8:13; Gal 5:4; Heb 6:6; Rev 2:5).
    - (2) John described this falling away as going out from apostolic doctrine (I Jn 2:18-19).
    - (3) Paul warned of the nature of this apostasy (I Timothy 4:1-3; II Tim 3:1-9; 4:3-5).
    - (4) He is compared to Judas, the son of perdition (John 17:12 cp 12:4-6; Acts 1:20,25).
  - c. The man of sin will be known by his self-exaltation as God (II Thessalonians 2:4).
    - (1) He will exalt himself AS God, shew himself to BE God, and OPPOSE God.
    - (2) He will sit as God in the professed temple of God (I Cor 3:16,16; Eph 2:20-22).
  - d. The man of sin will come into power through the working of Satan (II Thess 2:9).
  - e. The man of sin is a collective term describing the papacy (II Tim 3:17; Hebrews 9:7).
  - f. The man of sin would be revealed following the removal of a withholding (II The 2:5-8).
    - (1) The Thessalonians knew the thing that withheld the revealing of the man of sin.
    - (2) Paul had told them of these things when he was with them, why the mystery now?
    - (3) The restraint was the Roman Empire and its Caesars keeping power from the popes.
    - (4) Paul did not write it directly to save the church from Roman suspicion (Ac 17:5-8).
8. Observe the consistent agreement among the three descriptions of Daniel, John, and Paul.
9. It is helpful to understand where the popular idea of a future antichrist originated.
  - a. It was universally held that the hindering of II Thess 2:7 was the Roman Empire.
  - b. From about 1200 A.D. on the belief grew mightily that the Pope was the antichrist.
  - c. The saints killed by Rome found consolation that she was the dreaded antichrist.
  - d. The Jesuits, in order to defuse the Reformation, began teaching a future man of sin.
  - e. Francisco Ribera (1537-1591), a Jesuit, taught this in a commentary on Revelation.
  - f. It was not until Irving, Darby, and Scofield (1830-1920) that "Protestants" taught this.

## **HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF II THESSALONIANS 2:5-7**

These sample testimonies are raised, not to establish or even confirm the interpretation of scripture, but to show the novelty of the futuristic interpretation that the Holy Spirit restrains a future Antichrist.

**Tertullian (about 200)** wrote, "What is the restraining power? What but the Roman State, the breaking up of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce Antichrist."

**Cyril of Jerusalem (about 300)** wrote, "The predicted Antichrist will come when the times of the Roman Empire shall be fulfilled. . . . Ten kings of the Romans shall arise together. . . . Among these the eleventh is Antichrist, who, by magical and wicked artifices, shall seize the Roman power."

**Jerome (Roman; about 400)** wrote, "He (Paul) shows that that which restrains is the Roman Empire; for unless it shall have been destroyed, and taken out of the midst, according to the prophet Daniel, Antichrist will not come before that." "Let us therefore say what all ecclesiastical writers have delivered to us, that when the Roman Empire is destroyed, ten kings will divide the Roman world among themselves, and then will be revealed the man of sin."

**John Gill (Baptist; 1697-1771)**, commenting on II Thess 2:6, wrote, "By that which withheld, let, or hindered the open appearance of antichrist, were the Roman empire and emperors; these stood in his way, and whilst this empire lasted, and the emperors wore the imperial crown, and sat on the throne, and held the government in their hands, the popes could not come at the height of their ambition, dignity, and authority, nor shine in their glory; nor could the whore of Babylon take her seat, and sit upon the seven hills of Rome until the Roman emperor was taken out of the way: this therefore hindered, that he might be revealed in his time. . . . 'Only he who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way'; that is, the Roman empire and Roman emperors, and which were by degrees entirely removed, and so made way for the revelation of this wicked one."

**Matthew Poole (Anglican; about 1700)**, commenting on II Thess 2:6, "Expositors, both popish and protestant, pitch upon the Roman emperor and empire as most probably meant here by the apostle; and therefore he wrote not plainly, lest by writing of the taking away that empire, which the Romans thought to be eternal, he might stir up their hatred against the Christians." The Roman Empire being "divided into ten distinct kingdoms under distinct governments . . . and Italy and Rome wholly in the pope's possession: and hence this man of sin hath been long since revealed."

**Matthew Henry (Anglican; about 1700)**, commenting on II Thess 2:6, "There was something that hindered or withheld, or let, until it was taken away. This is supposed to be the power of the Roman empire, which the apostle did not think fit to mention more plainly at that time; and it is notorious that, while this power continued, it prevented the advances of the bishops of Rome to that height of tyranny to which soon afterwards they arrived."

**Barnes' Notes On the New Testament (1832-1851)**, in its comments on II Thessalonians 2:6-7, says, "To any one acquainted with the decline and fall of the Roman empire, nothing can be more manifest than the correspondence of the facts in history respecting the rise of the papacy, and the statement of the apostle Paul here. . . . In all history there cannot, probably, be found a series of events corresponding more accurately with a prophetic statement than this; and there is every evidence, therefore, that these are the events to which the Spirit of inspiration referred."

**Whedon's Commentary On the New Testament (1875)**, in its comments on II Thessalonians 2:6-8, says, "Now there is a universal Christian tradition, held in the Greek, Roman, and Protestant Churches alike, which explains both the hinderer and the reason for this mysterious silence. The hindering thing was the Roman empire, and the hindering person was the emperor. And says Chrysostom, 'If St. Paul had said that the Roman empire was to be destroyed, the heathen would have destroyed him as a rebel, and all the faithful with him as persons who took up arms against the Roman empire'. . . . The Roman-pagan empire must disappear, before the Roman-papal power can disclose itself. The Roman emperor must cease before the Roman pope can commence supremacy."

**Encyclopedia Britannica (1961)** says that the power which was "universally" believed by the Christians to be that which was retarding the revelation of the Antichrist was the Roman Empire."

# HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF ANTICHRIST

These sample testimonies are raised, not to establish or even confirm the interpretation of scripture, but to show the novelty of the futuristic interpretation that the man of sin is yet to be revealed.

**The Treatise On Antichrist (Waldensians; 1120)** states, "According to the apostle we may truly say, This is that man of sin complete, that lifts up himself against all that is called God, or worshipped, and that setteth himself in opposition against all truth, sitting down in the Temple of God, that is in his church, and shewing forth himself as if he were God, being come with all manner of deceivableness for those that perish, and since he is truly come, he must no longer be looked for; for he is grown old already by God's permission."

**Eberhard II (Catholic; 1240)** stated, "Ten kings exist at the same time, who have divided the circle of the earth, formerly the Roman empire. . . . And a little horn has sprung up under these, which has eyes and a mouth speaking great things. . . . With an unendurable lordship he plagues the people of Christ, and the saints of God; he mingles divine and human things, he sets in motion the abominable and the detestable things. What is more clear than this prophecy? All the signs and wonders which that heavenly teacher of ours pointed out to us have been fulfilled long ago."

**John Wycliffe (1380)** said, "Why is it necessary in unbelief to look for another Antichrist? Hence in ... Daniel Antichrist is forcefully described by a horn arising in the time of the fourth kingdom."

**John Huss (1415)** said, "Surely now the wickedness, iniquity, and baseness of Antichrist has been revealed in the Pope and his associates in the Council."

**Martin Luther (1520)** said, "The man of sin and the son of perdition ... by his teaching and his ordinances increases the sin and perdition of souls in the Church; while he yet sits in the Church as if he were God. All these conditions have now for many ages been fulfilled by the papal tyranny."

**John Calvin (1509-1564)** said, "Some persons think us too severe and censorious when we call the Roman pontiff Antichrist. But those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself. ... I shall briefly show that (Paul's words in II Thess 2) are not capable of any other interpretation than that which applies them to the Papacy."

**The King James translators (1611)**, in their preface, wrote, "The zeal of Your Majesty toward the house of God, manifesting itself abroad in the farthest parts of Christendom, by writing in defence of the Truth, (which hath given such a blow unto that man of sin, as will not be healed.)"

**The Westminster Confession of Faith (Presbyterian; 1646)**, in dealing with the church, states, "Nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be the head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God."

**The Philadelphia Confession of Faith (Baptist; 1742)**, in dealing with the church, states, "Nor can the pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof, but is (2 Thess. ii. 2-9) that antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God; whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

**John Gill (Baptist; 1697-1771)**, in commenting on II Thessalonians 2:3, wrote, "So here it intends the whole hierarchy of Rome, monks, friars, priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and especially popes, who may well be called the man of sin, because notoriously sinful."

**Jonathan Edwards (Congregationalist; 1703-1758)** wrote, "The rise of Antichrist was gradual. The Christian church corrupted itself in many things. . . . The clergy in general, and especially the bishop of Rome, assumed more and more authority to himself. . . . See how well this agrees with the prophecies, 2 Thess. ii. 3,4. Dan. vii. 20,21. Rev. xiii. 6,7. and chap. xvii. 3,4."

**Leroy E. Froom**, the noted historian of prophetic interpretation, concludes after nearly three volumes of carefully documented proof for his statement, "The futurist view of an individual Jewish Antichrist was unknown among the Protestants of North America prior to the nineteenth century."