

A Concentrated Article On  
***The Age Of The Antichrist***

Compiled/Formatted By Tom Stephens

*"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son Of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."*  
(2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

According to the Bible, the antichrist (cf. 1 John 2:18) is coming, then one who engineers the final onslaught of Satan against Christ and the saints, just prior to the time when our Lord Jesus Christ establishes His kingdom on earth. Paul's terms for the antichrist are the "man of sin" and "the son of perdition" (2 Thes. 2:3). Other terms used in the Bible are the "beast [rising] up out of the sea" (Rev. 13:1-10), "a scarlet coloured beast" (17:3), and "the beast" (Rev. 17:8,16; 19:19-20; 20:10).

**SIGNS OF THE ANTICHRIST'S COMING.** Unlike the rapture, the coming of the antichrist will not be without warning. Several signs point to his coming and his appearance. At least three events must occur before he makes his appearance on earth: (1) the "mystery of iniquity," already at work in the world, must intensify (2 Thes. 2:7); (2) the "falling away" must come (2:3); (3) "he who now letteth" must be removed (2:7).

1) The "mystery of iniquity," that behind-the-scenes activity of evil powers evident throughout the world (2 Thes. 2:7), will increase until it reaches its climax in the complete ridicule of and disregard for any standards and commandments held sacred in the Bible. Because of a prevailing spirit of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold (Mat. 24:10-12; cf. Luke 18:8). Yet a faithful remnant will remain loyal to apostolic faith as revealed in the N.T. (Mat. 24:13; 25:10; Luke 18:7; Rev. 2:7) Through these faithful people, the church will remain a warrior church, wielding sword of the Spirit until it is taken out of the world (Eph. 6:11-n).

(2) The "apostasy" (Gk. *apostasia*), literally meaning "departure," "falling away" (2 Thes. 2:3), or "abandonment and rebellion," will occur. In the last days, multitudes within the professing church, will depart from Biblical truth.

(a) Both the apostle Paul and Christ depict a dismal picture of the condition of much of the visible church—morally, spiritually, and doctrinally—as the present age closes (cf. Mat. 24:5,10-13,24; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:3-4). Paul in particular stresses that the churches will be invaded by godless elements in the last days.

(b) This "falling away" within the church will have two dimensions. (i) *Theological apostasy* is the departure from and rejection of a part or all of the original teachings of Christ and the apostles (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:3). False leaders will offer salvation and cheap grace and ignore Christ's demand for repentance, separation from immorality, and loyalty to God and His standards (2 Pet. 2:1-3,12-19). False gospels centering on human desires, needs, and goals of self-interest will become popular (2 Tim. 4:3-4). (ii) *Moral apostasy* is the severing of one's saving relationship with Christ and returning to sin and immorality. Apostates may proclaim right doctrine and N.T. teaching, yet abandon God's moral standards (Is. 29:13; Mat. 23:25-28). Many churches will tolerate almost anything for the sake of numbers, money, success, and honor (1 Tim. 4:1). The gospel of the cross with its call to suffer reproach from the world (Phil. 1:29), to radically renounce sin (Rom. 8:13), to sacrifice for the kingdom of God, and to deny one's self will become rare (Mat. 24:12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:3).

(c) Both the history of the church and the predicted apostasy of the last days warn all believers not to take for granted a continual progress of the kingdom of God through all ages until the end. At some

point in time the worldwide history of the church, rebellion against God and His Word will reach astounding proportions. The day of the Lord will bring God's wrath upon those who reject His truth (1 Thess. 5:2-9).

(d) The ultimate triumph of God's kingdom and His righteousness in the world, therefore, depends not on the gradual increase of the success of the professing church, but on the final intervention of God when He breaks into the world with righteous judgment (Rev. 19-22; 2 Thes. 2:7-8; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Pet. 3: 10-13; see also Jude).

(3) A pivotal and decisive event must occur before the man of sin" can be revealed and the day of the Lord and its tribulation begins (2 Thes. 2:2-3), namely, the taking "out of the way" of someone (2:7) or something that "letteth" the mystery of iniquity and restrain. When he who holds back the man of sin is taken out of the way, then the day of the Lord can begin (2:6-7). Some believe the restrainer is the church; some believe he is the Holy Spirit. But, The Spirit must remain on earth to some extent, in order that multitudes—according to the Word—must come to Jesus Christ during the Tribulation.

a) "He who now letteth [restraineth]" (2 Thes. 2:7) may best be understood as referring to the Holy Spirit, who alone has the power to hold back iniquity, the man of sin, and Satan (2 Thes. 2:9). The restrainer, is referred to by both the masculine article ("he who now letteth," 2:7) and by the neuter article ("what withholdeth," 2:6). Likewise, the word for "Spirit" in the Greek language can be referred to by a masculine or neuter pronoun (see John 16:8, note; Rom. 8:13; see Gal. 5:17, note the Holy Spirit's work of restraining sin).

(b) At the beginning of the final seven years of tribulation, the Holy Spirit will be "taken out of the way" (2 Thes. 2:7). This does not mean He is taken out of the world, but only that His restraining influence against lawlessness and the antichrist's entrance will cease. All restraints against sin will be removed and the satanically inspired rebellion will begin. However, the Holy Spirit will still remain on earth during the tribulation to convict people of their sins, convert them to Christ, and empower them (Rev. 7:9,14; 11:1-11; 14:6-7).

(c) The Holy Spirit's being taken out of the way enables the man of sin to come on the scene (2 Thes. 2:3-4). God will send a deluding influence upon all those who have refused to love the truth (2:11); they will accept the claims of the man of sin, and human society will degenerate to a depth of depravity never seen before.

(d) The Holy Spirit's sin-restraining ministry is carried on largely through the church, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). Therefore, many interpreters believe the Holy Spirit's being taken out of the way is a strong indication that the rapture of the faithful will occur at the same time (1 Thes. 4:17). That is, the return of Christ to gather the overcomers of His churches unto Himself and to deliver them from the coming wrath (1 Thes. 1:10) will occur before the beginning of the day of the Lord and at the time when the man of sin is revealed.

(e) Some scholars believe that the restrainer of 2 Thes. 2:6 (neuter gender) refers to the Holy Spirit and His restraining ministry, while in 2:7 the "he who now letteth" (masculine gender) refers to the believers who are gathered together to Christ and taken out of the way, i.e., raptured to meet Christ in the air in order to be with the Lord (1 Thes. 4:17).

**THE ANTICHRIST'S ACTIVITIES.** As the day of the Lord begins, the "man of sin" is revealed. He will be a world ruler who will make a covenant with Israel seven years before the end of the age (Dan. 9:27).

(1) His true identification will be confirmed three and one-half years later as he breaks his covenant with Israel, becomes the world ruler, declares himself to be God, desecrates the temple in Jerusalem, forbids the worship of the Lord (2 Thes. 2:8-9), and devastates the land of Palestine (Dan. 9:27; 11:36-45).

(2) The antichrist will declare himself to be God and will severely persecute those who remain loyal to God and Christ (Dan. 7:8,24-25; Rev. 11:6-7; 13:7,15-18). He will demand worship, evidently from a great temple that he uses as the center of his pronouncements (cf. Dan 7:8, 25;8:4; 11:31,36). Humans have sought this status since the beginning of creation (2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 13:8, 12).

(3) The "man of sin" will demonstrate through the power of Satan great signs, wonders, and miracles in order to propagate error (2 Thes. 2:9). "Lying wonders" means that they are genuine supernatural miracles that deceive people into accepting a lie.

(a) It is possible these demonstrations of the supernatural will be seen on television around the world. Millions will be impressed, deceived, and persuaded by this highly persuasive and popular leader because they have no deep commitment to, or love for, the truth of God's Word (2:9-12).

(b) Both Paul's words (2 Thes. 2:9) and Jesus' (Mat. 24:24) should caution believers to not assume that everything that is miraculous comes from God. Apparent "manifestations of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:7-10) and alleged experiences from God or the Holy Spirit must be tested by the person's loyalty to Christ and Scripture.

**THE DEFEAT OF THE ANTICHRIST.** At the end of the tribulation, Satan will gather together many nations at Armageddon under the direction of the antichrist and make war against God and His people in a battle that will involve the entire world (Rev. 16:16). When that occurs, Christ will return and supernaturally intervene to destroy the antichrist, his armies, and all who do not obey the gospel (Dan. 11:45; Rev. 19:15-21). Thereupon Christ will bind Satan and establish His kingdom on earth (20:1-6).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Full Life Study Bible For Spirit-Filled Christians, KJV; Zondervan Publ. House; Grand Rapids, Mi.; ©1992