

About Antichrist

Barry O'Dell

The faithful student of the Bible knows that “*antichrist*” appears only five times in Scripture, in only four verses, and all in the writings of the apostle John. The word itself simply means, “one who opposes Christ.” The first appearance of this term is found in First John 2:18. “*Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*” Next is First John 2:22 which reads, “*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.*” First John 4:3 states, “*And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*” Finally, Second John 7 reads, “*For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*”

From just these four passages we learn several things about antichrist. First, it is clear that there were already many antichrists present in the first century. Second, the antichrist(s) denied both the Father and the Son. Third, antichrist denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. Fourth, antichrist was a deceiver.

What the Bible reveals about antichrist is a far cry from what many within Christendom teach today. With just a quick search on the internet, it becomes evident that those who often write about antichrist have greatly embellished what the Bible reveals. For example, one article (<https://theconversation.com/five-things-to-know-about-the-antichrist-148172>) lists five things about antichrist. While two points in that article are true, the other three are rather fanciful and not based on the revelation of Scripture. The author’s first point claims that antichrist is “the son of Satan.” No Scripture is provided as evidence. The author’s second point is that the antichrist is “an earthly tyrant and trickster.” Again, no Scripture is provided as evidence. The author’s fifth and final point is that antichrist “will die in the end.” Of course, this idea comes from the false doctrine of an earthly kingdom established by Christ after the battle of Armageddon.

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Here is the sad reality about this rather uncomplicated Biblical subject: ignorance reigns! One major problem is that authors and speakers attempt to make the evil beasts of Revelation refer to some future political leader. The beast that John saw rise out of the sea is supposed to be antichrist. The problem? John already told us who antichrist was in First and Second John. In fact, the term *antichrist* is not even found in the book of Revelation! Why is it, then, that those who want to discuss antichrist seemingly always want to study Revelation?

Here is the truth - when we allow the Bible to speak for itself on this subject we know that antichrist is not some future political leader who will take control of the world by a one-world-government. We know that the antichrist is not going to take control of the world’s economy. What we **do know** is that antichrist has been in the world for 2,000 years. We **do know** that antichrists were false teachers in the church who were denying that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. That’s it! The truth of this subject is that it is not as spectacular as some try to make it. Most of the beliefs associated with antichrist are tied into the false doctrines of premillennialism and “signs of the times.” Matthew 24 is often cited as proof that right before Jesus returns to the earth, there will be signs that precede. The problem with that false ideology is that Matthew 24 (as well as Mark 13 and Luke 21) are passages that detail the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70. Concerning the return of Christ we are told that He will come as a “*thief in the night*” (1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). Jesus Himself said, “*Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning*” (Mk. 13:35). If it is the case - and it is - that no one knows when the Master will return, how could it also be the case that there will be signs, such as an earthly, political leader called antichrist just prior to the Master’s return? The Bible is its own best interpreter. We cannot read the doctrines we want to believe into the text and remain faithful to God’s revealed truth. There are many sincere people who live in fear of war, economic disaster, and persecution because they have bought into a false religious system. Be a serious student of the Bible and do not allow false doctrine(s) to shake your faith!

Of the seven things God hates mentioned in Proverbs chapter six, the last one of these seven is "...*he that soweth discord among brethren*" (Prov. 6:19). There are four parts to this statement: (1) "he" that is, the one who is doing the sowing; (2) The sowing itself; (3) That which is sowed; (4) To whom it is sowed among - the brethren.

As we think about the one who is doing the sowing, we should realize we are sowing something, whether good or evil. The life we live, the things we say, etc., show what we are sowing. Therefore, we must be careful not to plant the seed that would cause discord among brethren. We should be sowing seeds of peace and joy and things of such nature, the kind of seed Paul spoke about, the fruit of the Spirit found in the fifth chapter of Galatians. "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*" (Gal. 5:22-23). As everyone knows, fruit starts with a seed, and to produce its fruit, someone must plant it. If we plant the right seed in our hearts, then, instead of causing discord, we will help bring about unity.

The idea of sowing is an image that is used throughout the Bible. It is one that was common then and is still common today. I remember growing up on a farm and planting seeds in the field and putting out a garden every year. We always, without exception, reaped what we sowed. If we planted corn and beans, we reaped corn and beans. This follows the Biblical truth that all things produce after their own kind (Gen. 1:11-25). This is true of physical things, and the same principle is applied to spiritual things. If you sow discord among the brethren, then division is what will be the result. However, if you sow unity, then the brethren will be united together for the cause of Christ. One of the problems Paul addressed with the brethren in Corinth was division. "*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you*" (1 Cor. 1:10-11). The problem was they were still carnal and not spiritual-minded (1 Cor. 3:1). As they sowed seeds of carnality, they would continue to reap the fruit of division or discord. As Paul said, "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Gal. 6:7).

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The thing being sowed that God hates is discord. The word "discord" is only used twice in the Bible, and both times it is in this very chapter, 6:14,19. The idea of "discord" is "controversy, ... strife (conflict) – bitter conflict; heated, often violent dissension." (Logos Bible) The character of a Christian should never be one of strife. We should not be looking for conflict with others. But instead, we should seek to be peacemakers. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God*" (Matt. 5:9). The gospel of the Lord calls us to peace with God, and a desire to have peace with others - especially our brethren. When we empty ourselves of self and place Christ on the throne of our life, then, and only then, will we be able to have peace.

The discord is sown among the brethren. What a great shame many do not understand the relationship we are to enjoy as brethren. Of all the people on earth, there is no other group of people that we should enjoy being around and getting along with more than our brethren. Ask yourself this question: "Is it my objective to live together with the Lord and His children throughout eternity?" If the answer is yes, then should you not get started on it now! The Hebrew writer said, "*Let brotherly love continue*" (Heb. 13:1). We are commanded to love each other. John wrote, "*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth*" (1 Jn. 3:18). You cannot look for conflict with the brethren and then say you love them.

The world needs to see from the church that it is a united people - a people who love God more than anything in this world. Remember the words of Jesus, "*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. 5:14-16).

Have you ever invited someone to church only to hear them say that “one church is just as good as another?” This creates much frustration in doing evangelism with people from denominations or even with those who have no church affiliation. The Bible teaches that there is one body or church (Eph. 4:4), and this stands in stark contrast to what the world teaches about the topic of church affiliation. On the surface, this sounds like a reasonable argument, but when it is examined more closely one finds that it is fraught with error. If division was frowned upon in the church at Corinth, why do people in our age believe God stands in approval of such segregation. First Corinthians 1:10 says, *“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”* Is one church just as good as another one? Most people who make this statement are already attending a church that they have chosen to attend. The implication of choosing one church over another indicates that, by their own decision, one church is not just as good as another one. If not, why are they currently attending the church that they have chosen to attend? Why not attend all the different churches in the area if one is in fact just as good as another?

If one church is just as good as another, why are there so many divisions in the religious world? Considering the Lord’s prayer in John chapter seventeen, one would not conceivably argue that God likes division. John 17:20-21 says, *“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”* Christ prayed for the unity of all believers and there is no way this can be obtained in denominational division. Some of the divisions that exist in religion are about more than just opinions. Romans 16:17 says, *“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”* Some churches have split, and some have chosen to leave churches over real “endanger your soul eternally” doctrinal issues. If there are in fact divisions over real doctrinal issues, one church cannot be as good as another one.

If one church is just as good as another, why is there so much disparity between churches over otherwise simple doctrinal issues? Take for example the Bible’s teaching regarding the Godhead. Most would be shocked to learn that there are those who teach that Jesus is not an equal part of the Godhead. Scripture says differently in Colossians 2:9. *“For in Him [“Christ” in context—JOT] dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily.”* There are those who disagree about whether baptism is essential for salvation. While the Bible makes it abundantly clear that one cannot be saved without baptism (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16, et al.), certain manmade religions deny the importance of being baptized. First Peter 3:21 says, *“There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”* Surely, dear reader, you can think of several doctrinal issues between denominational groups that are diametrically opposed to one another. If doctrinal differences exist between churches, one church cannot be as good as another one.

If one church is as good as another, why are there so many differences in worship practices? One could make a long list of the differences that exist in what some view as being acceptable worship before Jehovah God. As a matter of fact, there are religious groups which have multiple worship “types” under one roof. Some will have a “traditional” worship assembly and then a “contemporary” assembly on the same day. These groups are apparently divided on how to worship God. God is the author of worship, and He determines appropriate devotion towards Him. It is not to be left up to man to decide what is acceptable. John 4:23-24 says, *“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*

Surely, one can see the folly of saying that “one church is just as good as another.” When the logic behind such reasoning is rendered invalid, it could very well be that some are left asking, “How can one choose a church that is acceptable in God’s eyes?” The simple answer is we must choose to be a part of the blood-bought body of Christ (Acts 20:28; cf. Eph. 4:4) that seeks to practice the things revealed in God’s Holy Writ (John 17:17) by not adding to nor taking away from things revealed in His word (Revelation 22:18-19). If we want to have the type of unity Christ prayed for (John 17:20-23), we must return to God’s word and practice simple New Testament Christianity. Instead of attending the “church of your choice” this next Sunday, attend the one of God’s design and practice. Matthew 16:18 says, *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”* One church is not just as good as another.

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The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3)
- Name of Christ (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
- Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Married to Christ (Rom. 7:4)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Jesus the Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23)
- Added to the church by God (Acts 2:41, 47)

Salvation

- Saved by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8-9)
- Not by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26)
- Not by grace alone (Matt. 7:21)
- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
- Heard, believed, baptized (Acts 18:8)
- Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
- Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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