



The Truth About ANTICHRIST

by David A. DePra

Intro

The contents of this small book will not agree with most prophecy teaching. Some may dismiss it and others may scoff at it. But it is nevertheless Truth that needs to be grasped by Christian people. It is hoped that readers would take the contents before the Lord and ask Him to give them wisdom and understanding with regards to the end of this age.

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Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesses 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. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (I John 4:1-4)

As we race toward the end of this age, the subject of antichrist is going to become more and more prominent. Most of the Christian world -- certainly the prophecy teachers; those that you see on television -- are looking for an individual that they say will be antichrist. They're looking for a person who is the antichrist. But if you read the scripture on this subject, you will find that it's not so much a person at all. It's a spirit.

Now, there may be -- as we get toward the end of the age and antichrist begins to become more prominent -- there may be individuals that represent that spirit more than others. There may be very prominent individuals -- maybe even one central one. We don't know. But in the final analysis, the people -- the persons that are used by Satan, that are used by the Spirit of antichrist -- these are not THE antichrist. The antichrist is the spirit that is behind all those manifestations --

inspiring those people. And that's always the case in scripture.

There is another important thing about antichrist in scripture that we need to see -- that for some reason gets lost in all of these theories. A lot of Christian people -- a lot of prophecy teachers -- are looking for a person in world government; a political figure; a leader who will emerge as the head of a world government -- many are looking for such a person who is antichrist. But that is not the Bible teaching on this matter either. Every single place in the Bible where antichrist is suggested, it has to do with a personage, or a group, or a spirit that is RELIGIOUS in nature. Why do we think it is always a SPIRIT, and that it is called anti-CHRIST? It's called, "antichrist," because it is a spirit or a movement that is a substitute for CHRIST.

The word, "antichrist," in the New Testament Greek, if you look it up, isn't simply that which is opposed to Christ, although in the end, of course, it is. Antichrist -- in the New Testament Greek -- means, "alongside of Christ; a substitute for Christ." And so this is a false Christianity. It's always a false Christianity. It was never anything else but a FALSE CHRISTIANITY.

Thus, despite any outward manifestation and representations -- such as a false prophet or religious figure -- "antichrist," is a SPIRIT. And if you gather up all of possible manifestation behind which is this spirit, they are all false forms of Christianity. They are subtle, attractive to natural man, and carry great deception.

When we begin to depart from these facts about antichrist that are revealed in scripture, and look for a governmental figure, or look for ONE person, we're off the track completely. The revelation of antichrist that is in the Bible is a false Christianity – which brings the church as the main target of the deception brought by this evil spirit. The goal of all false Christianity is to substitute for true Christianity – the goal of antichrist is always to substitute for the true Christ with a false one.

The Nature of Antichrist

In 1 John 4 above, you'll notice that John addresses his words about antichrist to the church. He says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit." He's talking to the church.

We have noted that the church is always the primary object of deception for Satan and for the antichrist – the antichrist is always portrayed as a RELIGIOUS spirit, with religious representatives. If you turn to Revelation 13, where it talks about the beast, it's the false prophet that gives power to the beast. Again -- religious in nature. The abomination of desolation of Matthew 24 and Daniel 12 -- which is the antichrist, set up in the holy place -- again, the holy place is the temple – the church of the NT -- religious in nature, Christian in nature. Also in II Thessalonians 2 – "the man of sin" – who is a representative COLLECTIVE man -- sitting in the holy place; sitting in the temple of God. The temple of God is the church. So again, we see Christianity, a false Christianity – antichrist as a substitute for the presence of Christ in His people. And this is 100% the context.

The term, "antichrist," isn't very often in the New Testament. It's only in the Epistles of John. The other instances, a few of which I've mentioned here from Revelation, Daniel, Matthew, and second Thessalonians -- the word antichrist does not appear, but the suggestion is undeniably the same spirit of antichrist.

If we gather all these instances in the Bible where antichrist is mentioned or suggested, do we actually believe that all of these instances are talking about different things? They're not talking about different things. They're talking about the same thing -- the same end time antichrist. The same warning given to us through different types, shadows, pictures, parables, and so forth is the same thing. It's always the same thing. And it's actually interwoven throughout the New Testament in many ways, shapes, and forms -- because Satan has always had the same goal. When he could not defeat Jesus Christ, he had to revert to another plan. And that other plan was to deceive those who might have followed Jesus, to create a false Christianity, to create a delusion.

Satan doesn't have the power to jump on people and make them do anything or make them believe anything. But Satan does have the freedom to try to DECEIVE. His access point for deception is the error that people have in their hearts. If I'm deceived, there's a basis in me for that deception. It may not be something I'm consciously doing or choosing, but it's at least an unresolved area where I don't know Christ.

Now, the good news there is that if I'm deceived, this can be the point where God can alert me to

the vulnerable areas in my life. Deception is the devil playing on my vulnerabilities, my ignorance, my unbelief, and so forth. God may allow things to progress to where consequences begin to come -- and it'll be a wake-up call to me. The church ought to be waking up today because of all the consequences of the church's unbelief that are coming upon us. But instead of that -- and I'm not putting everybody in the same category; I'm not trying to be overly negative here -- but instead of the church waking up today, the church just blends in with all the garbage that's happening. And few people have the guts to stand up and speak out -- especially in the last five years where all this woke stuff has come front and center.

The Church MUST Stand for Christ

We have got to get it very clearly defined that this, "woke," narrative of the past few years is of Satan, the devil. It is certainly that out in the world -- but it is that all the more in the church. We MUST stand against it; preach against it; live against it -- but not by being focused on it -- but by being focused on Jesus Christ. You preach for Christ. You preach the cross and the resurrection. You preach the person of Jesus Christ. That's the focus. But in doing that, you will inevitably have to preach against that which comes against him. You will.

Read the Gospels, read the Epistles. This is always a necessity. It gets very tiresome to listen to some of these people who think that if you point out error or name names or come against false teaching, that you're causing division. You're not causing division. You're

pointing out a division that's already there that Satan has caused, and you're trying to expose it and bring things back into unity against Jesus Christ.

We need to point out error if we're going to point out the truth. Again, it's not that we focus on error. We don't want to become defined by what we are against. But if you are defined by what you are for, then you will have to mention, preach, and stand against what you're against.

We live in a moral world. There is such a thing as truth and error; right and wrong. You preach truth; you preach right – and by definition, you're going to be coming against error and wrong. It's about time we started calling things as they are instead of trying to sit on the fence and keep out of trouble. We're not going to keep out of trouble if we fall to Christ. Trouble is going to come and find us. We need to begin to choose.

The Abandonment of the Truth

For the last 2000 years, there has been a restraint of the forces of evil because of the presence of Christ in His people. Despite all of the imperfections, until the last fifty years, Jesus Christ was at least generally honored in the world, and the center of life in the church. That is now less and less the case.

When Adam sinned, Satan became the god of this world, and the realm of darkness governed. This world became so evil that God had to destroy it with a global flood. After the flood, things quickly began to degenerate once again. It happened at a much slower rate – if for no other

reason than the fact that the human life span was greatly reduced. But every single civilization that has been discovered has one thing in common: Demonic influence -- if not demonic dominance. It is there in the architecture -- but especially there in the religion of these cultures. There was NO knowledge of the true God. Rather, the governing power of Satanic forces encircled the globe.

God did preserve a lineage -- and eventually called Abraham. Abraham ultimately birthed the nation of Israel. In the OT, we find that Israel is the ONLY light to the nations. And even though Israel never allowed God to have His full purpose through them, God did have a nation through whom the Messiah, and Savior, would come.

If you examine history, it is the Truth in Christ -- the presence of Christ -- or the preaching of the God of the Bible -- that pushed back the forces of evil. Wherever the name of Jesus Christ was preached, and exalted as Savior, demonic religion evaporated. We see that in many of the nations of Western Asia and Europe. But in those nations where Christ was not preached, or where Christ was refused in favor of another religion -- such as Islam -- there remains religious demonic influence on a wide scale, or religions of hate have arisen. This has been a general fact that cannot be denied.

But in this day things have changed. We have entered into a spiritual condition never before seen in the spiritual history of this world. In the past, there was the preaching of Christ -- and people either accepted Him or refused Him. But now -- on a scale never before seen -- we have

people and nations who once accepted Christ -- abandoning Him. In other words, we have APOSTASY.

The consequences for APOSTASY are always far worse than the consequences for simply refusing Christ. Light refused ultimately spells condemnation, but light received and then abandoned spells REPROBATION and condemnation. When any person or nation who possessed light and Truth chooses darkness -- rather than remain in that light -- the forces of evil will then easily come in and begin to govern. The latter state becomes worse than the former -- which is exactly what is now happening in the world -- but is also happening in the church.

The church has generally forfeited faith in Christ -- and has therefore opened the door to antichrist on levels not before seen. The restraint of the forces of evil within the church -- restraint that was because of Christ in His people -- has been compromised, and has more and more been removed. Therefore, the spirit of antichrist is gaining ground. To the degree that apostasy happens in the church, the spirit of antichrist is going to come in to fill the void. This is especially important to grasp with regards to I John 4 and the antichrist. This passage could not be more applicable than right now.

The Possibility of Deception in the Church

Let's look at 1 John 4, and let's get serious about this because John is very serious about it. He says there, starting in verse 1, "Beloved..." So this is written to the CHURCH. "Beloved, believe

not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God."

Now let me stop right there for a second. Why would John write this to the body of Christ if it were not seriously possible for Christian people within the body of Christ to be deceived; to believe other spirits; to be under a delusion and under a deception? Well, if it was not possible for the body of Christ to be deceived -- for a church to be deceived -- he wouldn't write it.

Now, I say that because I have heard with my own ears -- I've watched videos or read articles -- a lot of this is going on -- I have heard with my own ears preachers stand up and say that God will not allow you to be deceived as long as you're faithful, "to follow our movement." This, in and of itself, IS deception.

God WILL allow you to be deceived. You will be deceived if you violate and depart from what God says -- if you and I will not read the Bible and adhere to the word of God. If you and I will not keep our faith in the person of Jesus Christ, God will not only allow us to be deceived, but it is guaranteed that we will be. In fact, we already are.

Christian people can be deceived. Christian people can be destructively deceived. Read the New Testament. Paul cried out -- he cried out over the Galatian Church -- a church that was deceived into legalism. He said, "I cry out as a woman in travail that Christ be formed in you, that you know Christ." (see Gal. 4:19) He said, "You are under another gospel." Is not, "another gospel," a FALSE Christianity? Absolutely it is.

The Galatian church had not renounced Christ as Lord and Savior. But they had been deceived into a path that was other than faith in Jesus Christ. Paul said this was ANOTHER GOSPEL – a false Christianity. In fact, he said that whoever was teaching this false Christianity was to be ACCURSED. Does that sound serious enough?

In both Galatians and Corinthians, Paul talked about the fact that a Christian's faith could be shipwrecked. He talked about the fact that there were Christians walking in the flesh, rather than in the spirit -- and that they would reap what they sowed.

If we want to take these things lightly we are going to pay the consequences. I don't want to be sarcastic about this, but I want to make a point and just say it this way: Somebody ought to write a book entitled, "Scriptures that apply to everybody else but me." -- because that's what I think a lot of us have as an attitude: All these warnings in the Bible apply to somebody else, not me. Yet some of the people that take this position are the most deceived you could ever meet. I have known people who were arrogant -- filled with Bible knowledge -- but arrogant -- but they thought that there was no way that they could be deceived. But they were already deceived through the arrogance of their own spiritual pride. Deception is more than a doctrinal issue. The worst deception is that of self-righteousness and spiritual pride.

We all stand vulnerable to that. That's why God has the work of the cross. If you start to get arrogant and spiritually proud, God will be faithful

to bring into your life something that will set you straight -- if you will listen and pick up that cross -- but there are many that won't. Pray to God, we would, because it's our salvation out of deception.

Jesus promised that the Spirit of God was given to guide us into all truth. How many understand that also means to be guided OUT of untruth? Well, if Jesus promised that, then I have to believe that God is faithful -- and that what Jesus promised is happening in your life and in my life - - and in the life and in the life of the Church. So, if a person or the church is not walking in the Truth, whose fault is that?

Right now, everything that God is doing by his Spirit is unto the revelation of the truth in Jesus Christ, not just doctrinally, but in people spiritually. And the two – doctrinal and revelation in people -- will always agree. Yet, in the church today, almost nothing that's going on is unto that end. People don't know. It isn't taught. Satan has blinded Christian people to the primary purpose of God, for which he called them -- to know Him and to be expressions and extensions of him. But incredibly, that blindness – that OMISSION of the central purpose of God in His people – is exactly what John says that the antichrist will seek to establish. We will see that in a moment.

This passage is a warning. It is a warning by the Apostle John to the body of Christ. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits to see whether they are of God." Where is this happening today – where are people and churches

using this test for Truth that John give in this passage?

Spiritual Deception

Before we move on, we need to ask: John said, "Believe not every SPIRIT, but test the SPIRITS...." What does John mean when he talks about a SPIRIT? I think sometimes we don't recognize what the Bible means when it talks about a spirit. Do we think that when John mentions spirits, that he's talking about some disembodied cloud floating around in a church building? Do we think that he is simply referring to people when, say, they speak in tongues or make these prophetic pronouncements like some people claim they do? No, a spirit isn't necessarily going to look like a spirit. It's not necessarily going to act like what we would expect. A spirit is the underlying spiritual environment that is created wherein there is a picture of God in his son, Jesus Christ, presented. So you could have a spiritual environment that seems happy and wonderful and full of unity – but that is governed by a false Christ. You could have different environments that seem good or that seem bad, but there could be a demonic spirit behind it.

Now, if you doubt that, if you think that's too extreme, if you think that we're looking for a devil under every rock, we're not. But I simply point to this passage, "Beloved, believe not every spirit..." Doesn't this clearly indicate that there might be spirits trying to find access in churches and in people's lives – a danger that people need to be aware of?

God is telling us something that we need to take seriously. But few take this seriously today. It is basically ignored -- it is just pushed away as applying to somebody else. Most think that it applies to a first century problem -- but not for today.

But let's read on and see what John is saying. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits -- test the spirits -- to see whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." I would submit that if many false prophets are going out into the world in the first century, during the time of the Apostle John, what would we say about today with television, internet, and the printed material that is available? False prophets abound. In fact, there are more false prophets – false teachers around today -- than there are true prophets.

This also tells us more about what John means by SPIRIT. He is talking about evil spirits that can work through PEOPLE – in this case, people who claim to be speaking for God. They may be self-deceived, or deliberate deceivers. But John is telling us that the spirit of antichrist gains access primarily through false ministers of Christ – "angels of light."

As we noted, this shows that antichrist is not one person. It is a spirit that works through many people. That is the case even if there are prominent representatives of antichrist. It is the spirit working IN the sons of disobedience – not merely the sons of disobedience themselves. In short, antichrist works through people, but the people – through unbelief – provide the flesh and blood.

The apostle Paul made it clear:

***For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the darkness of this
world, against spiritual wickedness in high
places. (Eph. 6:12)***

***For the weapons of our warfare [are] not
carnal, but mighty through God to the
pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down
imagination, and every high thing that
exalts itself against the knowledge of God.
(II Cor. 10:4)***

Christian people need to wake up. I realized that this sounds negative. It sounds like being down on everything. But read what the Bible says -- and get a picture of the gravity of the situation and figure out what time it is in this age. You'll understand that we don't have time anymore to fool around and play church. We got to take these things seriously and understand what God is doing and how we are to respond, or we're going to be deceived.

The Test

John does not leave it to us to figure out how to test the spirits. He's going to tell us what the test is. God is very thorough about this. He says, here's the test -- "Hereby we know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ having come in the flesh -- that is the Greek reading -- is of God. We could also translate: "Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."

Now, what does that mean? The theologians and those who are focused on the academic meaning of the Bible will immediately point to the historical fact that in the time of John Gnosticism was invading the church.

Gnosticism was a heresy. Now you have to remember that this was a Christian heresy. It started out as a pagan heresy, but it invaded the church and was Christianized. As noted earlier, antichrist isn't a pagan issue or something that is limited to secular government. It came into the church: AntiCHRIST, not AntiBudda, or ANTIpagan. No. AntiCHRIST.

Gnosticism taught, and this is the bare bones of it, that the physical world was evil. And because it was evil, God would not touch it. God would have nothing to do with it. Consequently, Gnosticism, given that as a premise, had to teach that Jesus Christ was not the only begotten son of God become man. In other words, Jesus Christ, according to Gnosticism, could not have become a flesh and blood human being because that would have meant that God touched evil and became evil.

They demanded that Jesus Christ only appeared to be a man. In short, Gnostic Christianity refused to confess, "Jesus Christ having come in the flesh."

The basis for John writing this passage certainly was the claim of Gnostic Christianity that Jesus Christ did not literally become, through a human birth, a flesh and blood human being. According to this heresy, THE WORD did not become flesh -- and dwell among us. You'll find in the writings of

John that that truth is repeated many, many times because he's writing against this error so often. It is a primary Christian Truth – the entire plan of God's Redemption through Christ depends upon the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a flesh and blood human being.

The centrality of this Truth of Jesus having come in the flesh cannot be overstated – if we deny it or omit it we do not have Redemption. Indeed, if we deny or omit it we do not have Christianity at all. Notice why: If Jesus did not actually become a flesh and blood human being then through His redemptive work He has not come to dwell in His people. In that case, we are not saved. The very core of Christianity, "Christ in us," is null.

The reality of Jesus Christ in His people by the means of the Holy Spirit is fully dependent upon the fact that Jesus Christ Himself was the Word become flesh – dependent upon Jesus becoming a flesh and blood human being. It is because Jesus was God the Son, born into this world from the outside of this world – lived, died for us, was raised, and ascended – all as a human being – this is what made it possible for Jesus Christ by the means of His spirit to come and dwell in His people. The two are as one truth.

"Christ in us, the hope of glory," (Col. 1:27) is the core of Christianity. It is this reality of Christ in us that John is defending in this passage. He's saying that the spirit of God will always confess this great reality. And when John says, "confess," he is talking about revealing, proclaiming, or manifesting. Indeed, the very presence of the spirit of God IS the confession of this core Truth. But even more importantly, the

spirit of God will actually make this happen in our experience – God will work by His spirit to bring us into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, Who is in us.

Joined to the Lord

The Spirit of God will always confess that Jesus Christ, having come in His flesh, presently IS come to dwell within those in the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him." When Jesus Christ comes to dwell in us, we are joined together with Christ in spirit in resurrection union. But we are not joined with Christ in soul or natural man in this age. No. Rather, Christ is joined with our spirit, but within our body and soul. Paul's picture of the believer as an earthen vessel in which dwells the Treasure is perfect.

John says, "Hereby you know the Spirit of God." The Spirit of God will not only reveal the fact that Jesus Christ dwells within His people, but the spirit of God will actually reveal Christ in His people -- the purpose for which the Spirit of God was given according to Jesus was to reveal the living Christ to us in an inward way.

The very essence, the very core, the very definition of Christianity is being addressed here. The Spirit of God will always reveal Christ to the believer in an inward way – will reveal that Jesus Christ IS come into our very being. If you read John 14, 15, and 16, every purpose for which Jesus said the Spirit of God was given centers on a revelation of Him. But not just in doctrine; not just in concept. That's all there, of course. But the purpose of the Spirit of God is to actually

reveal Jesus Christ to us in an inward way so that we may know Him and inwardly realize Him.

The Spirit of Antichrist

How often is this mandatory revelation of Jesus Christ as dwelling in His people even talked about in Christian ministry today? John is saying that the Spirit of God will always confess this Truth -- and yet we almost never hear it spoken of, let alone preached, as the core truth of Christianity. We don't hear it preached as the test for Christianity; as the test for where the Spirit of God is at work. We don't even hear it mentioned.

Can we see a terrible blindness here? I don't think most Christian people are deliberately and knowingly neglecting this. But I do think that Christian people are blind to it -- Christian people don't know and they don't know to know. But if we read on in the passage, it is this blindness -- merely the omission of this Truth -- that is exactly the work of the spirit of antichrist.

John writes in verse 3: "And every spirit that confesses NOT Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the Spirit of antichrist."

Now, let's note something very essential to see: We just read in verse one and two, what the Spirit of God WILL confess; what the Spirit of God WILL DO. But did you notice that in verse 3 that John doesn't mention ANYTHING AT ALL that the Spirit of antichrist WILL DO? He doesn't. All that he mentions is what the Spirit of antichrist WILL NOT DO. He tells us only what the spirit of antichrist will OMIT. The Spirit of antichrist will

NOT do what the Spirit of God WILL do: Confess Jesus, reveal Jesus. The spirit of antichrist will do anything necessary, or preach as a substitute, that which will OMIT this reality, HIDE it, or BLIND people to the reality of Christ in them.

This tells us that what is NOT preached is as important as what IS preached. If, "Christ in us," that is, "Jesus having come in the flesh," is NOT being revealed – is not central to either a person's life or a church's life – then the spirit of antichrist is at work. The omission of this core reality is a sufficient identifying mark that antichrist is at work.

How many understand that antichrist blinds? The term itself suggests that possibility. "Antichrist," means, "instead of Christ," and so a primary device of the enemy is to preach anything BUT, "Christ in us" – to preach anything else as the substitute. This substitute will often blind believers to the real Truth. And so even though there are millions of Christian people who don't necessarily believe horrible error, there are millions who are blind to the Truth. But that is a set up for real deception – because if we do not know Christ there will ultimately be no standard against error. Where Christ is not realized, the enemy can easily fill that void with that which is of darkness.

Read again 1 John 4:3: "Every spirit that confesses NOT Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is not of God." Let's talk a little more about what John means by SPIRIT. Certainly included in what he means is the spiritual environment that is governing a church. Is it the presence of Christ in his people? Is it the reality -- the

knowing of him in an inward way -- the realization of Christ? Read the New Testament. That's what governs a church according to the mind of God. Where that's absent, what is governing? Well, maybe it's theology. Or perhaps it is a focus upon church life -- a nebulous idea of church as a family; as a society; as an institution. Folks get together, they study the Bible, they listen to sermons, they sing in the choir, and they have fellowship, and they have friends and they have family activities and they meet certain challenges. They try to raise the money to pay the bills. And all of it may be innocent enough; it may be honest, moral, and good. But yet, what is the spiritual environment? Is it what John says it must be to be a living, dynamic church according to the mind of God? Paul says, "Christ, our life." (Col. 3:4) That is essentially what John is teaching. Is Christ the life of our church? Not merely in word, but actually – in experience?

When all the religion and posturing is skimmed off, what is the spiritual environment that governs this church? What is the life blood? What is the pulse of this church? Is it Christ in us -- individually and collectively -- the hope of glory? Is it Christ our life? Is it, "Yet not I but Christ?" Is it Christ crucified and raised – but also US crucified and raised in Him? Well, it's supposed to be that. And if it's not, what is it? Is it just dead religion -- or maybe just a big blank space? A blank space is a very dangerous thing. What I mean by blank space is I mean all the areas in our Christian experience that are supposed to be filled with Christ but aren't. There is an omission or a blindness there – which is evidence of antichrist.

There are many sincere churches that don't know the Truth and don't know to know the Truth. They may not be deceived into horrible error and heresy right now, but the fact that there is a huge blank space regarding experiencing Christ as our life is dangerous. that makes them ripe for deception. That makes people by the tens of millions everywhere just ripe to be picked for deception because they don't have a living experience with the living, resurrected Christ that can hold them and keep them out of it. They're not under the work of the cross. They're not in the process of losing life to him in order that he might be their life. Again, not a criticism, not a condemnation, not a put down, not taking a superior position here -- but simply repeating what John is saying here because it is vitally important. It's a warning right from the Bible. Every spirit that confesses NOT Jesus having come in the flesh is not of God. The blindness or omission is evidence that antichrist is working.

John states: THIS is the Spirit of antichrist. WHAT is the Spirit of antichrist? Every spirit that confesses NOT, "Christ in us the hope of glory." You can't get any clearer than that. The Spirit of God focuses upon Christ in you, the hope of glory, on a personal level. The Spirit of antichrist blinds people to that and will confess anything but that.

John doesn't even mention one thing that antichrist will confess -- although there is ultimately going to be great error. But what does matter is what is NOT being confessed. Where Jesus Christ having come in the flesh -- his flesh and then ours today -- where that's absent -- the

Spirit of antichrist is at work -- at least to have blinded people. THIS is the spirit of antichrist.

Antichrist Already at Work

John writes, "THIS is the Spirit of antichrist. Whereof you have already heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." Note the wording: John calls antichrist IT. IT. IT should come; IT is in the world. And IT was already out there in John's times. So like I said before, you may look for an individual called antichrist. If you do, I think you're going to be deceived. And I say that despite the fact that there could be representatives and main representatives as we approach the end of the age. But regardless of that, antichrist is a spirit, a spirit that ultimately will deny and redefine the very core definition of Christianity. IT will deny, and blur, and redefine Christ in you the hope of glory as Christianity -- and offer something instead.

John wrote, "Whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. " Paul likewise wrote, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work. (II Thes. 2:7) These words were written 2000 years ago. Yet both apostles are telling us that the spirit of antichrist was ALREADY at work – at work in the church. Could it be more clearly stated that antichrist is NOT an individual, but a spirit? That antichrist is NOT a political figure, but a religious figure?

The greatest danger is to look outward for a person that is antichrist, all the while antichrist is a spirit working within the church – a collective man – who is a living denial of Jesus having come

in the flesh. But such are the deceptions of the enemy. It is happening right now.

The Man of Sin

As noted, Paul wrote about the spirit of antichrist – using another picture; using other terms. But it is the same Truth. Paul prophesied of, “the man of sin; the son of perdition.” This is not a different manifestation of evil during the church age; during the end time. This is the same manifestation – pictured in a different way.

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and [by] our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 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 opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now restrains will restrain, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: [Even him], whose coming is after the working of

Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (II Thes. 2:1-12)

We remember that in his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul taught Truth about the second coming. But in the aftermath of reading Paul's epistle, they apparently thought that the Second Coming was imminent. Paul wrote this passage to show them that they were wrong – but within this passage we are given much additional teaching on the end of the age, leading up to the Second Coming. We are also given another picture of the spirit of antichrist.

False Christianity

The first point that Paul makes is that the Second Coming will NOT take place until there is first an apostasy. The word, "apostasy," means, "a falling away." Of course, this speaks of a falling away, or of a, "standing aloof," from CHRIST. This immediately gives us the context of what Paul is talking about – he is talking about the church.

During the end time apostasy, we can be sure that there is going to be a ongoing manifestation of Jesus Christ – a clear proclamation of the Truth – so that anyone who wants Christ can turn. But according to Paul, even though the Truth will be

proclaimed – indeed, in reaction to the Truth being proclaimed -- many who are already in apostasy will harden themselves all the more. Indeed, that hardening will eventually result in the formation of, “the man of sin; the son of perdition.”

Note that, “apostasy,” requires that a person had been standing by faith in Christ – perhaps not yet saved – but at least open to the Truth. But these, “fall away,” from Christ. Thus, this is Truth forfeited. It is light rejected, in favor of something else.

If we read this passage, and grasp what Paul is describing as a spiritual condition, it becomes clear that, “the man of sin; the son of perdition,” is NOT an individual. It is a collective man – comprised of all of those who are in apostasy.

Note that last point: Paul says Christ will not return, “except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed.” Can we see that the falling away results in the formation of the man of sin? The two are directly related – those in apostasy are collectively revealed as, “the man of sin” – a collective man – a body of people who have forfeited the Truth.

That, “the man of sin,” is a collective body of those in apostasy is proven by the fact that this collective man sits in the temple of God – which is the body of Christ. In other words, this, “man of sin,” is all of those who are in apostasy – and yet continue WITHIN the body of Christ. They continue walking in false Christianity.

Of course, most who are in apostasy, but continue walking in false Christianity – in the churches – are deceived. Most don't fully realize what they are doing. But the root problem here is unbelief – it is that at some point they have chose darkness rather than light.

So, we see several things. First, the Truth of Christ will continue to be revealed. Second, in response to that Truth of Christ, there will be many who refuse or neglect Christ; many who forfeit what God offers by His grace. This is going to happen on a level never before seen – and as it does happen, those in apostasy will form what Paul calls, “the man of sin; the son of perdition.” This will be a collective body of those who are still in Adam, or who are operating out from the Adam nature – it will be a false Christianity. This will mature to the point where this collective, “man of sin; son of perdition,” will be established within the church as the new normal – celebrated as true Christianity.

Someone might say that this has always happened within the church – that there is nothing new about it. That is true. There have always been seasons of apostasy. Indeed, during the middle ages, the Roman Catholic Church was considered to be true Christianity – and we could reason that in every way this fulfilled Paul's prophecy. But it did not – for the apostasy that Paul is describing is one that leads up to The Second Coming. Thus, this apostasy about which Paul is warning is going to be far beyond any before it. If we were to quote other scriptures, we would see that this end time apostasy is going to be far more evil, with signs and wonders, and governed by a spirit

of deception never before unleashed upon the earth.

Many have been taught that this, "man of sin," is an individual – just as the antichrist is supposed to be an individual. But we have seen that this is not the teaching of scripture. The antichrist – the spirit of antichrist -- was already at work in the first century. So, despite the fact that this man of sin and the antichrist ARE one in the same, these terms do NOT speak of any individual person.

John wrote of the spirit of antichrist – and warned that it would work through false prophets – and that Christians needed to test the spirits. Paul gives the same warning, but shows the fullness and maturity of this spirit of antichrist within the church. There will always be false prophets inspired by the spirit of antichrist. But as this spirit infiltrates the church – as believers DO believe any spirit – there will be formed a CORPORATE MAN. Just as there is the body of Christ, so there is a body of antichrist -- who is, "the man of sin, the son of perdition."

Thus, "the man of sin," is the collective body of those who have fallen away from Christ – or who refused him to begin with -- but who now represent a false Christianity. Sure. These people, as they fall away from Christ, form this false Christianity. They comprise this, "man of sin," who, "sits in the temple of God." The temple of God is the church.

The Necessity of the Cross

Why did Paul use the terms, "man of sin," and, "son of perdition?" To what do they refer?

Can we see that both these terms suggest BIRTH or OFFSPRING? The man OF sin is that which is born OF sin. The SON of perdition is that which is born of perdition. To who, or what, could that apply? It applies to none other than ADAM -- and all of the offspring of Adam. "The man of sin," and, "the son of perdition," represent the collective body of people who are matured and hardened in the Adam nature – but nevertheless operate within a false Christianity.

Now, this might seem impossible. Why would anyone do that? Because they are deceived. But all that is necessary for a person to become one who professes Christ yet remains in Adam is for that person to refuse or neglect the personal Cross. In principle, Christ without the Cross is Adam. Christianity without the Cross is dead religion.

The human race is delivered out of the Adam race into the new man in Christ by being planted into the death and resurrection of Christ. But many will not take their place in HIS DEATH, and thus, remain IN ADAM. They are deceived – and therefore operate – at best -- within a traditional, religious form of Christianity that is NOT in Christ, but in Adam. This is, "the man of sin...who sits in the temple of God."

ANY form of Christianity that minimizes the personal Cross – or that people practice who have not come into an actual experience of Christ in

His death – is a false Christianity. It is false because it is NOT new life – it is not CHRIST IN US. It is religious manifestation of Adam.

Jesus died for all – but in doing so – made it possible, indeed, essential, that we die in Him. There is no other deliverance out from the Adam race into new life in Christ. But Satan, through the spirit of antichrist, has always sought to create a false Christianity that is the result of sidestepping the personal Cross. The outcome is a religious man – still in Adam – sitting in the church – fully on the throne of his own life. This is antichrist. It is the collective man of sin.

The Abomination of Desolation

The abomination of desolation, spoken of in Daniel 9 and 12, is the SAME manifestation of evil revealed by John and Paul. All of these pictures are antichrist. In Matthew 24, Jesus points to Daniel's prophecy:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:) (Matt. 24:14-15)

To understand what Jesus was revealing we must first understand exactly what "the abomination of desolation" is. Actually, there were several historical occurrences wherein the abomination of desolation was set up in the temple in Jerusalem.

One was in 167 B.C. – and may be the one to which Daniel was referring – and one was in 70 A.D. – and was the one to which Jesus was referring. In each case, the blood sacrifices of animals which God had ordained were replacing with the sacrificing of swine's flesh. In other words, the animals that God had said were CLEAN – and could be sacrificed – were replaced by animals that God had said were UNCLEAR and must never be sacrificed.

Now, those were actual historical occurrences. But Jesus and the book of Daniel are using those historical events as representative of spiritual principles that apply eternally. In other words, the abomination that these events were in the material world is a type and shadow of something worse in spirit. The spiritual principle and the Truth holds regardless.

Under the Old Covenant, God commanded that certain animals be sacrificed to Him to make atonement for sins. Likewise, these same animals were allowed to be consumed by God's people. These animals were deemed to be CLEAN by the Lord. But there were other animals that were forbidden to be sacrificed. Likewise, these same animals were forbidden to be consumed by God's people. These animals were deemed to be UNCLEAR by the Lord. In addition, in the OT, God's people were not permitted to offer to the Lord any sacrifice that was blemished or tainted.

These ordinances were a type and a shadow of the Truth revealed in the New Testament regarding the Redemptive work of Christ. Gather up all of the CLEAN animals and you have a type and shadow of Jesus Christ. He alone was CLEAN

– He alone was a sinless human being. His death alone could be a substitute for the necessary death of the Adam race. No one and nothing outside of Christ could do that redemptive work, for all others were UNCLEAR.

Right away we can see that the sacrifice of unclean animals would be a abomination because it would be a denial and a mockery to what the sacrifices pointed to: The sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It would be a distortion of the need for humanity to be redeemed, and a distortion of the only means by which humanity was redeemed. It would be a exaltation of humanity IN ADAM as being acceptable to God.

Those who are IN CHRIST are holy – clean. But humanity in Adam is UNHOLY; UNCLEAR. Clean animals represent Christ – and then by extension – those who are IN HIM. UNCLEAR animals represent those who are NOT in Christ – often called GENTILES or HEATHEN. To set up the sacrifice of unclean animals and to normalize it in the temple is to say that those in Christ are accepted by God – which would be to say that Christ and what He has done is meaningless, for clean and unclean are alike.

The entire system of OT animal sacrifices of clean animals that God commanded pointed towards Jesus Christ crucified – which was necessary to usher in a new creation through His resurrection. Replace those animal sacrifices with that of unclean animals and you have no death of the Adam race in Christ crucified. You have not new creation in Christ. Rather, you have man in Adam presented in the temple of God as a Christian – as the man God is after.

Of course, this is all symbolism – but the principle being illustrated is already happening in Christianity. The prophecies are being fulfilled.

Daniel's Prophecy

***And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make [it] desolate.
(Dan 9:27)***

***And from the time [that] the daily [sacrifice] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, [there shall be] a thousand two hundred and ninety days.
(Dan 12:11)***

Daniel records that the Messiah will, “confirm the covenant with many for one week.” This “covenant” is not the Old Covenant or the New Covenant – but both. The Messiah will confirm all that God has promised in COVENANT. Go back to the garden of Eden. The one covenant that God has given – represented in two phases – is the promise of a Savior. We see this in Genesis 3:15. Jesus Christ confirmed that covenant – He was the fulfillment of it.

But it says, “for one week.” This is prophetic language, and thus, not a literal length of time – but represents a season in God’s plan. A week represents God’s creation – so here we see the fullness of God’s new creation in Christ Jesus. Again – this began immediately after the sin of

Adam, and was promised through the seed of the woman – Who was Jesus Christ.

Daniel says in Daniel 9 that “in the midst of the week” the Messiah shall cause the sacrifice to cease. It was the death of Jesus Christ – Christ being the one and only sacrifice that could win redemption – that caused the daily sacrifice to cease. There had been a daily sacrifice in the temple of God. But now there is a once for all sacrifice in Christ that is for EVERY DAY forever.

But the sacrifice of Christ that ended the daily sacrifice happens in the midst of the week – a week being 7 days. Here we see type and shadow, and not literal days. If we take the 7 days of a week and put the death of Jesus Christ in the midst of that week, we have 3 ½ days before His death, and 3 ½ days after His death. In keeping with the spiritual symbolism, we see that the entire age – from Adam to the return of Christ is THE WEEK during which Jesus Christ confirmed the covenant God gave in the garden in the beginning. Symbolically, not literally, Jesus died in the MIDST of this week. Just to confirm that this is what is being prophesied, we know that the ministry of Jesus did last 3 ½ years. But that leaves us the second half of the WEEK – it leaves us with the second 3 ½ prophetic or spiritual years. I would submit that this is the entire church age – from the death of Christ until the return of Christ.

This spiritual picture fits a number of other place in scripture that speak of the time period of 3 ½ years – or 1260 days – or 42 months – or times, a time, and half a time. Many have made this period of time to mean THE great tribulation. But

it only represents great tribulation in a secondary sense. Rather, ALL of these periods of time that equal 3 ½ years or 1260 are again talking about the church age – from the time that Christ died – from the time that HIS death replaced the daily sacrifice until the Second Coming. The church age is the great tribulation – a time of spiritual trial, upheaval, and suffering.

So what we have is the first 3 ½ days of that week – the week wherein the Messiah confirms the covenant – these first 3 ½ days of that week represent the 3 ½ years of Christ's ministry. And then we have the second 3 ½ days of that week wherein the Messiah confirms the covenant being fulfilled by the church age. That same church age is the tribulation – 3 ½ spiritual years.

This fits Daniel 12. Daniel says that from the time that this daily sacrifice shall be taken away – which is taken away by the death of Christ -- until the abomination of desolation is set up will be 1290 days. This is again the 1260 days, or 3 ½ spiritual years – which is the church age – plus and additional 30 days. During the church age, Jesus Christ continues to confirm God's covenant – through His very presence in His people. But during the same church age, there is also the formation of the abomination of desolation – a build up to the point where it will be SET UP and NORMALIZED.

But what of the 1290 days? Why the extra 30 days? The first 1260 days of the 1290 days represents the church age – as noted. The extra 30 days are not literally extra days – but THIRTY most often represents MATURITY. Daniel is telling us that while this abomination of

desolation is forming during the church age that it will be at the very end of the church age that it will come into FULL MATURITY – and when it does then it will be the fullness of abomination of desolation.

We have already seen that a false Christianity – a false Christianity wherein Christ crucified and His people crucified IN HIM – resulting in a NEW MAN in Christ – this is going to be pushed aside and replaced by RELIGIOUS MAN IN ADAM. This will happen within the TEMPLE – the church. But since MAN IN ADAM is an UNCLEAN AND UNHOLY race – to establish this false Christianity within the temple of God can be typified by pointing to the literal abomination of desolation that was set up through the offering of unclean animals, more specifically swine's flesh.

There could be no more of an abomination to God than this because it is a denial and refusal of Jesus Christ – the once for all and only holy sacrifice for sin. And there could be no more of a complete attempt to destroy the purpose of God, for it would completely negate all redemption for humanity and offer a substitute.

Can we see that this is exactly equal to “the man of sin” of II Thes. 2? – which sits IN the temple of God? That this is exactly what antichrist means – within the church? And that this is also what is pictured in Revelation 13 with the beast and the false prophet? These pictures are of all the same spiritual wickedness that has always been within the church – but because the people of God have forfeited life and Truth is now going to be matured and fully established and normalized.

The Deception

We have seen that Paul promised that the return of Christ must be preceded by a great apostasy. Over the last 2000 years, there has always been apostasy going on -- because for the last 2000 years the gospel has always been preached. And there has always been a false Christianity within the church – the temple of God. But Paul cannot be referring to that on-going apostasy. If you read the passage, in context, he is clearly referring to a specific apostasy that will happen at the end of this age before the return of Christ.

There has been a build up during this age – a separation of the wheat from the tares – a continual work of God. At the end of this age there is going to be a climax where the fullness of the man of sin – where the fullness of the spirit of antichrist – is going to be made manifest. But God is faithful. Alongside of that there is going to be the manifestation of Jesus Christ – to Whom people can turn by faith.

There are many so-called prophets who promise that there is going to be a great end time REVIVAL. But Paul says there is going to be a great end time APOSTASY. If there was ever a point at which Paul could have assured us that there was going to be a great end time REVIVAL it was in II Thessalonians 2. But he did not. He directly stated that before Jesus returns that there must come a great end time APOSTASY – indeed, it will be the culmination and fullness of all of the apostasy of the last two-thousand years. It will result in the maturity of the

working of antichrist – “the man of sin, sitting in the temple of God.”

Now, if we think about this in practical terms, how could an apostasy deceive so many people who had at one point professed Christ? There is really only one way: If that APOSTASY looks like REVIVAL. And that is exactly what scripture suggests. It suggests deception that is affirmed with great signs and wonders. It will appeal to people’s emotions, natural man, and religiosity. It will appeal to people in an INWARD fashion.

This is what spiritual deception – this is what the spirit of antichrist does – it works upon natural man’s religious inclinations. As we have seen, the spirit of antichrist will blind people to the fact that Jesus Christ lives in true Christians and is THE LIFE of His people – but will offer a religious substitute. The spirit of antichrist will blind people to the necessity of the personal Cross – keeping them in the Adam life AS professing Christians. That is deception

The end time apostasy will look, feel, and act like an end time revival. This end time apostasy will simply repeat the very first lie of the enemy. Satan told Eve, “You will not die.” The spirit of antichrist will tell vulnerable people, “You need not die under the work of the personal Cross.” It is the same lie. It will affirm and harden a false Christianity that does not preach, “Jesus having come in the flesh.” Rather, it will deceive people into owning themselves as their own god – but incredibly, all the way professing Christ WITHIN the church, the temple of God.

So there is NOT going to be a great end time REVIVAL. But there will be a great end time APOSTASY – it is already underway. God will make Christ known in the midst of this apostasy. The deception will be that the great end time apostasy is going to look like an end time revival – this is antichrist -- and will carry away many with this deception.

The Faithfulness of God

God has never left His people without warnings of an impending time of trial. But the content of those warnings are not just a description of the evil that is to come. More importantly, God has provided His Son – and the Truth about His Son. If you gather up all of the warnings of God, they exhort us to receive Christ and then to come into an inward realization of Him.

What good will outward warnings do for us if we do not know Jesus Christ in a living, inward way? We can take heed to the warnings of God by doing what Jesus said to do:

If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matt. 16:24-25)

Practically speaking, we can make this commitment by asking God in faith, “to do whatever it takes to bring us into the fullness of Christ.” What it WILL take is that we, “deny ourselves and take up our cross.” God will initiate this. But we must follow – if we want to follow Christ.

Again, we see the necessity of the personal Cross as the pathway to experiencing Jesus Christ as our life. We are not talking about salvation. That is only the entry point. We are talking about the means by which we continue to experience Christ as our life – the means by which the reality of, “Christ in us,” becomes an experiencing of Him.

One of the great warnings and exhortations of scripture to professing believers is our passage in I John 4. “Jesus having come in the flesh” – “Christ in us, the hope of glory” – Jesus is THE LIFE and is the foundation upon which all that God does is built.

The letter to the Hebrews states:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son. (Heb. 1:1-2)

Jesus is God’s Word to us. He is God’s first word and He is God’s last word. God speaks Christ to believers in an ongoing INWARD revelation of Himself. This is what God is doing today in His people – it is equal to the spirit of God confessing, “Jesus is come in the flesh.” God is revealing Christ in an inward way – bringing His people into an inward realization of Christ.

This is the revelation that the spirit of antichrist will never confess. Rather, the spirit of antichrist will blind people to this, and fill in the blank with a substitute. This blindness – and the false Christianity that will fill the void – is the work of

antichrist that will result in the abomination of desolation being set up in the holy place, and the man of sin being seated in the temple.

Anyone who desires Jesus Christ need not be deceived. God desires the Truth for us more than we could ever desire it for ourselves.