

# THE ANTICHRIST

**Who is it? What is it? What is his strategy? When does he arise?**

Christians make one of two mistakes in dealing with any subject to do with Satan; they either ignore it and fail to be responsible, or they are preoccupied with it and become unhealthy. Such is the case with the subject before us; some groups go on and on about it, while others can't be bothered to see what scripture says, even though the times they live in demand this (see appendix one). This paper seeks to correct this situation with a balanced presentation.

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## General scriptural evidence

The word 'antichrist' only appears in the following passages:

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the **Antichrist** is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 Jn 2:18-19)

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is **antichrist** who denies the Father and the Son. (1 Jn 2:22)

Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the **Antichrist**, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. (1 Jn 4:3)

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an **antichrist**. (2 Jn 1:7)

## What do these passages teach us?

- **THERE HAVE BEEN ANTICHRISTIAN PEOPLE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH**, the period of the 'last times', 'last hour' or 'last days' (Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2; 1 Pt 1:5, 20). These were people who went out from the church, but were not believers. As opposers to Christ's doctrine, they were of the 'spirit of antichrist', but were not the final revelation of him.
- **ANTICHRIST WILL RECEIVE FULL EXPRESSION AT THE END** ('Antichrist is coming'). The very end of the Gospel age is called 'the last day' (6:54, 11:24, 12:48) - the Final Judgment (Jn 6:39, 40, 54). However, before the end, there is a shorter period of apostasy also called the 'last days' (2 Tim 3:1). The full expression of Antichrist appears in these 'perilous times'.
- **THE ANTICHRIST SPIRIT DENIES THE TRINITY** and all the persons in it.
- **THE ANTICHRIST SPIRIT DENIES JESUS AS THE GOD-MAN.**
- **THE ANTICHRIST SPIRIT THRIVES BY DECEPTION.**

## What does the word 'Antichrist' mean?

The word is Strong's number 500, avnti,cristoj *antichristos*, which derives from two words:

1. 473 = ajnti *anti*, a primary particle meaning: a) 'opposite to', 'against'; i.e. contrast, opposition; or b) 'instead of', 'in the place of', 'because of'; i.e. substitution.
2. 5547 = Cristo, *Christos*, meaning 'anointed'; i.e. Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

Therefore, in connection with scriptural texts, we see that the Antichrist is a person who opposes God and combats Christianity by substituting Christ; pretending to be Christ by deception but fiercely fighting his church. He opposes Christ in order to take his place.

## Names of the Antichrist

Note that these six names define the character of the Antichrist in opposition to the Lord.

Name	Text	Character	Jesus
The Antichrist	1 Jn 2:22	Opposes Christ.	The Christ (Messiah)
The Man of Sin	2 Thess 2:3	Full of sin, promotes sin.	The Sinless one
The Son of Perdition (lit. 'destruction')	2 Thess 2:3	A destroyer. [Note that the only other person called by this name is Judas Iscariot.]	Son of God
The Lawless One	2 Thess 2:8	Against God's law and will.	The Righteous one
The beast from the sea	Rev 13:1	The name signifies wild or venomous beast. Political power.	The Lamb
The little horn	Dan 7:8	Rising political power.	The Almighty

## Characteristics of the Antichrist

As the scion of Satan, his characteristics are obviously satanic and clearly understood by all: he is full of sin, opposed to God, he is a destroyer, he is a wild beast, he is a deceiver and so on. Then, as we have seen so far we can also state that the Antichrist seeks to replace Christ. He opposes Christ by substituting himself for Christ.

### A desire for exaltation

However, the crucial element of his character is an aspiration for ascension. This is the essence of Antichrist - he seeks to replace God with himself; he wants to be exalted, to ascend to God's throne. His very name teaches this since he is *'instead of-Christ'*, and Christ is the exalted one. This is also the chief characteristic of his master Satan.

Most commentators agree that the condemnation of the king of Babylon goes beyond what is human and especially applies to his inspiration - Satan. Thus Isaiah says,

**How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'** (Isa 14:12-14).

We will see that Babylon is a type of the antichristian kingdom, so this passage could easily apply to Antichrist. The sinful desire of Antichrist and Satan is to be God; the hubris of their folly is that they believe they can be. The massive deception they utilise against others has warped them into self-delusion. All Satan's efforts are engaged in fulfilling his proud strategy - to engineer world events in order to be as God on the earth, to rule God's prized possession of self-expression. Somehow, he believes this to be achievable. In this plan, Antichrist believes it to be achievable also.

## Types of the Antichrist

There are various types of Antichrist in scripture; indeed some folk see him everywhere, but we must be judicious. There may be traces of Antichrist in Cain, Lamech, Pharaoh, Abimelech or Absalom for instance - people in ruling power that led apostasy, rebellion and brutal opposition to God's people. It is possible to see more evidences, or suggestions of him, in kings opposed to God and in confederations, like Chedorlaomer (Gen 14) or Saul; especially since what follows is a revelation of a type of Christ in government such as Melchizedek or David. This follows the pattern we see in 2 Thessalonians 2, Daniel and Revelation regarding Antichrist - namely, governmental rebellion against God followed by the appearance of Christ. However, there is one key antecedent that is of the utmost importance, the first rebel king of an empire - Nimrod.

### Nimrod - the key precursor of Antichrist

Antichrist is the culmination on earth of all those with a similar desire in world history. There were signs of this before the flood as sin dominated most people; but the first person to co-ordinate this desire for exaltation with a practical strategy to be exalted, combined with a plan for world domination, was Nimrod. In fact, understanding Nimrod is essential to understanding many elements of the flesh and the devices of Satan in these days.

Though he appears briefly in the Biblical record (Gen 10:8-12) it is clear that he is a very significant figure in the revolt against God after the flood. Though the derivation of his name is difficult, the most likely etymology is that it comes from the Hebrew word *nimrodh*, which means: 'let us revolt'. He is also called 'a mighty one' (*gibbor*), a phrase that derives from the word *gabar*, which means 'to be strong', 'to act insolently'; some say it derives from 'tyrant'. Then he was twice stated to be a 'mighty hunter', where the Hebrew suggests that it was men not animals that Nimrod hunted in defiance of God. So Nimrod was a tyrant, who hunted down men who opposed him and began a great rebellion against the Lord.

He established the first empire in Mesopotamia, conquering the city-states Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh in Shinar (southern Mesopotamia). From there he built more city-states: Nineveh (later the seat of the Assyrian empire), Rehoboth Ir and Calah. For the first time a single man dominated a huge area comprising seven great cities, two of which would later become Empires themselves (Nineveh/Assyria and Babel/Babylon).

Not satisfied with great human power, Nimrod established the building of the tower of Babel to ascend unto God. In those days 'babel' meant 'gate of God' [after God's judgment it came to mean 'confusion']. Nimrod's seat of government was associated with idolatrous divinity. There are various theories about why he built it. Some suggest the tower was a proposed escape from any future world flood (note bitumen instead of normal mortar); others that it was merely a temple structure for sacrifices; others that it was a serious attempt to reach what was considered to be the realm of God, or it may simply have been hubris.<sup>1</sup> In any event it was an affront to God. Picturing the end time destruction of Antichrist, God *came down* to Babel in judgment (Gen 11:7).

Secular history tells us that Nimrod established pagan worship centred upon himself as the sun god, and his wife Semiramis as the moon goddess, who became the mother of the gods. After Nimrod's death, Semiramis had a child of adultery called Tammuz whom she claimed was Nimrod reborn. Thus was established the foundational principles of occult Babylonian religion: sun-god, mother/queen of the gods, the god-child - a satanic trinity. Thus

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<sup>1</sup> *Hubris* is from a Greek word for excessive pride particularly directed against God.

Semiramis became Isis in Egypt, Cybele in Asia, Ceres in Greece, Sisa in Scandinavia and so on. All future occult mythological pantheons were based on this system. Nimrod himself underwent various changes in different languages - Baal, Bel, Marduk, Tammuz, Moloch, Chemosh, Osiris, Apollo etc.

So, soon after the flood, instead of worshipping God, man fulfilled the evil nature of his sinful heart in two directions: establishing control over men through tyrannical empires and establishing false religion based on hubris.

The situation was so serious that God personally intervened to put a stop to the development of Nimrod's empire and status. This was done by the confusion of tongues. It became impossible for workers to understand each other and the Babel project collapsed. Instead of a unified empire, suddenly there was chaos. Thus began the spread of nations as groups that understood each other wandered off to found their own civilisations. Some groups retained certain skills that could be passed on in their common language, while others lost almost all skills. This explains why some stone-age people remain to this day. The process of dispersal led to the establishment of nations round the globe, each with their own tribal characteristics. The deathblow was given to world-empire, a deathblow not easy to overcome, as there was no longer common unity of language, and as time passed no common culture either. Harmonising disparate nations is far from easy and only Rome succeeded for any length of time due to a flair for simple administration coupled with brutal military efficiency.

The history, kingdom and characteristics of Nimrod set the precedent and pattern for all antichristian activity in history and is the model for the final expression of Antichrist. Antichrist will be the fulfilment of a blasphemous, idolatrous kingdom dominating men through a despotic world empire set in opposition to God and claiming divinity.

### **Antichrist's purpose**

This explains what Antichrist is all about. His characteristic of seeking exaltation is exactly the same as that desire which drove Nimrod to seek dominion over a global empire, devoted to self-worship as God. Satan inspires such plans since through this system he can express his evil nature, something he cannot do in the world, as he is an immaterial spirit. Antichrist's kingdom at the end is the recapitulation of what Nimrod's kingdom was at the beginning. Throughout history God has restrained this development in order to protect the elect, who would be wiped out in such an evil and godless society. At the end, God allows this development again to demonstrate the fulness of sin in man as the slave of Satan who caused his fall from grace. This mature evil society will then be condemned and destroyed by the coming of Christ and the end of the world.

## Key scriptural passages

Some people claim to see teaching about the Antichrist all over scripture, especially those following Dispensational theology. However, a close examination shows that most of these are far fetched and were clearly not in the minds of the writers at the time. What follows is the common agreed position regarding the key passages. A few other passages also refer to Antichrist but add only a little to what is here (e.g. Rev 11, 17, 19; which we will cover later).

### Daniel 7; The Little Horn

1 Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea.

3 "And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.

4 "The first *was* like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

5 "And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and *had* three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!'

6 "After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

7 "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It *was* different from all the beasts that *were* before it, and it had ten horns.

8 "I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, *were* eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

9 " I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment *was* white as snow, And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool. His throne *was* a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire;

10 A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened.

11 "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame.

12 "As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

17 'Those great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings *which* arise out of the earth.

18 'But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.'

19 "Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, *with* its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, *which* devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet;

20 " and the ten horns that *were* on its head, and the other *horn* which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance *was* greater than his fellows.

21 "I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them,

22 " until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favour* of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

23 " Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces.

24 The ten horns *are* ten kings *Who* shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first *ones*, And shall subdue three kings.

25 He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time.

26 ' But the court shall be seated, And they shall take away his dominion, To consume and destroy *it* forever.

27 Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.'

We will look at the question of world empires as symbolised in this vision in a later section. Also note that in Dan 8:9 the 'little horn' there refers to Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, the blaspheming Syrian king (d. 164 BC) who desecrated the Temple. He stands as a picture of the final hubris and blasphemy of man as expressed in the end, but is not the Antichrist.

What is the gist of this regarding the Antichrist?

- As the little horn, Antichrist follows in the line of world empires, previously represented by Babylonia, Persia, Greece and Rome (v 1-7, 17-20). While the sea symbolically represents nations in turmoil, especially heathen nations, Daniel earlier mentions the 'Great Sea' (v2). While this may be literal, and thus mean that these empires would occupy an area around the Mediterranean (the 'Great Sea'); which they all did; <sup>2</sup> it is generally agreed that this is a symbol for all mankind.
- The ten horns arise after the fall of Rome and form a 'kingdom' out of the Roman Empire (v24). This could simply refer to Europe that was based upon the Roman Empire and developed out of it. The number ten is not to be taken literally here. There is a fulness of kingdom power, or government, that represents the beast (horn) after the fall of the Roman Empire. We have no warrant to try to identify any specific nations here as there is no clue given.
- In some way, the Antichrist emerges out of the Roman Empire, after it has fallen, and Europe (v20, 24). This appears to mean it will be centred in a European power; Christendom rather than outright pagan nations. It uproots some kingdoms in its establishment (three can't be pressed literally).
- The horn is characterised by intelligence ('eyes'), power ('horn') and arrogance ('pompous' lit, 'great' words; v8, 25).
- The beast is only permitted by God to prosper for a specific time (v11); then he is killed.
- The kingdom of Antichrist makes war on the saints (v21, 25).
- This kingdom changes times and laws (v25); it legalises lawlessness; society is completely corrupted.
- This continues until God intervenes and the saints inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, (v22, 26, 27). The period, 'a time and times and half a time', is the Gospel Age (v25, see later).

This complies with what we already know. Antichrist is opposed to God and blasphemously proud, seeking to dominate world affairs and destroy the people of God. The Lord allows him to develop his lawless empire until it is destroyed by the coming of Christ and the saints inherit the kingdom. However, it opens up the concept that Antichrist's kingdom has connections with previous world empires.

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<sup>2</sup> The empires of China, India, the Celts and others are never in view in Scripture. Even those empires that are named, such as the Hittites, don't focus in prophecy.

## 2 Thess 2; The Lawless One, the Man of sin, the Son of Perdition

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,  
10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

- First note (v2) that we are not to be shaken by notions that Christ has already come. This has been propounded in history by certain people with various agendas (e.g. Grotius) and is called Preterism. Preterists teach that the prophecies in Revelation, specifically regarding Antichrist and the tribulation, were fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD). Thus there is nothing in Revelation of direct practical value to believers today. Despite its utter foolishness, there are still people that maintain this today. They are to be avoided.
- Antichrist arises in connection with the apostasy of many from the church. There is a great falling away from Biblical truth in the run up to the final revelation of Antichrist (v3).
- Antichrist opposes God and claims to be God. He does this primarily by sitting in the temple (sanctuary) of God (v4). We will discuss this later.
- Paul had previously explained these things in more detail to the Thessalonians; unfortunately we do not know the scope of this teaching, which is here just highlighted (v5).
- At the time of writing, Paul says that there was a restraint on the full revelation of Antichrist but the mystery of lawlessness (man trying to be God) was already at work. Indeed it has always been at work (v6). This restraint would be removed in God's timing (v7). We do not know what this restraint is. Suggestions include civil government, the Roman Empire, the church or an angel.
- At this point the Antichrist will be revealed (uncovered, lay open what wasn't seen), but his time is so short that immediately Paul tells us that the Lord Jesus will destroy him by his breath (his authoritative word) and brightness (his personal glory) when he returns (v8).
- The revelation of Antichrist is by the operation of Satan and includes false signs (v9). This deception will convince the un-elect who will consequently perish. Only the truth in Christ saves and protects from this deception (v10). Those who follow Antichrist's deception will come under a strong delusion and thoroughly believe the lie that man can be God (v11).
- The result of this deception is unrighteousness and condemnation (v12).

Paul's focus is mainly upon the lawlessness of Antichrist, emanating from powerful satanic deception, as opposed to the righteousness of Christ, and those who follow him in the truth.

Note the contrasts:

<b>Antichrist</b>	<b>Christ</b>
Lawless	Righteous
Sin	Holiness
The Lie	The Truth
Exalts himself	Exalted by God for obedience
Seeks to be God	Humbled himself taking the form of a servant
Sits in God's temple	God's people are a temple in Christ
Christ's appearance destroys him and his empire	Christ's return is the consummation of his glory
Demonstrates lying wonders	Demonstrated true miracles
Fosters deception	Brought the truth
His followers perish	His followers are glorified
His followers had pleasure in unrighteousness	His followers believed the truth

### **Rev 13; the Beast**

1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like *the feet of a bear*, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

3 And *I saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.

4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.



15 He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number *is* 666.

The seven heads and ten crowned horns speak of total political, ruling power. It also shows the close connection with Satan, the fiery, red dragon with seven crowned heads and ten horns (12:3). The beast is the worldly manifestation of Satan in fallen mankind, the activity of the devil throughout history by organised human means. Its name is blasphemous - it denies God and opposes him with great hostility.

One has to keep closely in mind the connection with Daniel's prophecy here, which we will develop later. Note the essential characteristics of this wild beast:

- **IT UNIFIES THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DANIELS' BEASTS** (political world powers, Dan 7:17, 23).
  - It will be glorious and powerful, speaking with authority like, Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Empire (mouth of a lion, Dan 7:4).
  - It will involve a confederacy like Cyrus' Medo-Persian Empire, being strong - stamping on opposition (feet of a bear, Dan 7:5).
  - It will arise and subdue all swiftly, like Alexander's Greek Empire (leopard or panther, Dan 7:6).
  - It will be ruthless, terrible, brutal and universal like Rome, persecuting saints (ten-horned beast, Dan 7:7; implied in Rev 13).
- **IT ARISES FROM THE SEA** (i.e. subdues heathen peoples and sinful warring nations - Rev 17:15; Isa 17:12, 57:20) just as Daniels' four beasts (Dan 7:2-3 with 17).
- **BUT THE KINGS ARE ALSO FROM THE EARTH** (peaceful civilised society; Dan 7:17; Rev 13:11). The kingdom is a mixture of pagan and Christianised nations; the authority (kings, the false prophet) originate from Christendom. [Notice that Christ has his right foot on the sea and his left on the earth (Rev 10:2). The beast seeks control of what Christ is sovereign over.]
- **IT HAS 10 CROWNED HORNS** - as Daniels' 4<sup>th</sup> beast - fulness of worldly political power. It is a reminder of Rome.
- **IT HAS SEVEN HEADS** - as Daniel's four beasts had together (one on 1<sup>st</sup>, one on 2<sup>nd</sup>, four on 3<sup>rd</sup>, one on 4<sup>th</sup>). A counterfeit of God's perfect kingdom.
- **IT THUS REPRESENTS UNIFIED WORLD POWER IN OPPOSITION TO GOD**, a unification and fulness of what has been seen before.
- **THIS KINGDOM IS EMPOWERED BY SATAN** (who is a dragon, also with 10 horns and 7 crowned heads - note heads crowned not horns - he is superior to the beast, Rev 12:3); it is a truly satanic world-empire.
- **IT ENCOMPASSES ALL THE WORLD** - (Rev 13:7-8).

### Political power

We are first given a picture of this end-time political power of Antichrist, energised by the power of Satan, as a beast from the sea - the turbulent waters of nations and political upheaval, especially uncivilised nations.

The deadly wound refers to something prominent in past empires that is now thought to be dead, but is miraculously revived at the end. This may refer to:

- The prevalence of paganism, thought to be wiped out by the time of the late Victorians.
- Another interpretation is that the wounded head is Rome, fallen after 1,000 years of history.
- Or it may be the actual concept of world-empire, also thought to be unimaginable by modern, civilised society. The downfall of Rome so long ago merely adds weight to the idea that world-empire is a thing of the past.

The concept of world-empire is the most likely interpretation as it is an unspecified head that received the mortal wound. In fact, both paganism and world dominion were considered to have received a deathblow by 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism but current events show that both are on the rise.<sup>3</sup> It should also be stated that paganism and world-empire go together. All the empires in view here were heathen, and most included emperor worship.

It should also be remembered that the last pagan world-empire was Rome, and the gradual downfall of Rome after the first century AD is commensurate with the rapid expansion of the kingdom of God. Even in the early days the growing church was stated to have **'turned the world upside down'** (Acts 17:6). The first wave of the beast's persecution against the church was conducted by Saul, who himself became the greatest apostle of church growth. The death-blow to pagan world-empire is connected with the growth of the kingdom of God. This is the period of restraint mentioned in 2 Thess 2:6-7 and Rev 20:1-4. The thousand years is no Golden Age millennium, but the Gospel or church Age; ten is the number of divine completeness, thus 10 x 10 x 10, a period of divine fulness, the period when the elect come to fulness, completion. When the binding is removed, the final kingdom of Antichrist emerges. The end-time expression of the beast will be focused on destroying this kingdom; indeed the resurrection of pagan empire is Satan's counterfeit of the resurrection of Christ - the beast appeared to be all but dead, and then is surprisingly vivified.

The best interpretation, therefore, is that the recovery of the mortal wound refers to the concept of a new worldwide, pagan, political empire; a 'miraculous' revitalisation of that which Nimrod began and was curtailed by the confusion of tongues and culture. The creation of separate tribal languages and cultures after Babel led to perennial wars throughout human history - a huge hindrance to establishing a world-empire, but Antichrist overcomes this problem. This period coincides with the persecution of the saints and attempted destruction of the church. The healing of the mortal wound is the reversal of history - at the end, paganised world-empire flourishes and organised Christianity is ruthlessly exterminated. In the previous 1600 years paganised world-empire was obliterated and 'Christian' cultures flourished, governing most of the world.

Whether this empire arises by conquest and force, or by alliance and agreement is hard to say. Some believe that Nimrod's kingdom came about by force, while others state it was by confederation. The truth is we cannot be sure; neither can we be sure about Antichrist's completion of Nimrod's precedent. Very likely it combines both conquest and alliances. Alliances develop after initial wars that were ruthless and complete (**Who is able to make war with him? v4**). For instance during the Persian Empire, submission by Medes and Persians

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<sup>3</sup> Paganism is now the fastest growing religion in the UK. Witches and divination appear frequently on national television. Also it is now openly admitted that the concept of independent sovereign states is a thing of the past. All nations are controlled by higher powers of global finance, international administration and global corporations. For instance, the UK no longer has sovereignty over most of its functions, which are controlled by the EU, which is not a nation but is run by unelected bureaucrats. There is not space here to develop this.

was voluntary, but to Greeks it meant subjugation to be resisted. As the beast develops his empire, there will probably be initial warfare followed by peaceful submission, much like Rome's 400 year *Pax Romana*.

What does seem clear is that men believe this time to be a golden age, a time of global peace secured by submission to the beast (**They worshiped the beast** v4, 8). Antichrist controls all things to secure peace and harmony in global society. Politics are unified, social problems are fixed, crime is subdued, religion is harmonised, poverty eradicated, commerce stabilised, and there is even the suggestion that climate problems are corrected (**He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven ... he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs** v13, 14).

Thus the frenetic activity of Antichrist in the nations is to develop worldwide dominion through the establishment of a global empire, based upon worship of Satan - which is what Satan wanted throughout history. It is not enough for him to have the worship of false religions, he wants the world to worship him. Antichrist, the beast, is the devil incarnate.

### **Religious power**

Then we see the religious association in the Antichristian government, symbolised by the second beast from the stable, calm earth (civilised society); in other words, both civilised and uncivilised or heathen and Christianised nations follow the beast. This is the False Prophet (Rev 16:13, 19:20, 20:10) - a spirit of falsehood, set to deceive the church. The second beast works by spiritual deception: he looks like a lamb but speaks from the devil (Rev 13:11, 19:20). He seems innocent and appealing, but he is a devil, a wolf, Satan as a shining angel (2 Cor 11:14). He is evidenced in the Lord's warnings about many false teachers, false christs and false apostles that would arise particularly at the end.

The political power works in connection with religious power, false spiritual power, occult power, and is focused upon giving worship to Satan through the beast. The control of mankind is towards giving worship to Satan - this is the enemy's great purpose. This is what he wanted from Adam and even from Christ (Matt 4:9). Mark this, the key aspect of the beast's deception is to infiltrate occultism into men. In unbelievers this is done by pragmatic means, such as: medical techniques (e.g. acupuncture, Qigong, hypnosis, crystals, reflexology etc), managing methodologies, psychotherapy and relaxation or fitness therapies (e.g. meditation, Tai Chi, yoga, judo). But it is also part of his strategy to corrupt the evangelical church by introducing a focus upon 'self' along with occult & pagan elements in the guise of idolatrous worship, corrupt teaching, false signs, inner-healing, passivity, visualisation, sacramentalism etc.

There is every reason to identify this religious power with Antichrist; that is, it forms a part of the Antichristian kingdom power, rather than being a separate individual. The second beast is so closely related to the first that they belong together as a unity (see Rev 13:11ff). The second beast administers and develops the power of the first. Without the second beast, the first could not maintain control. This beast, the False Prophet, is the intellectual arm that persuades, teaches and deceives men to support the political purposes of Antichristian policy. Like a prophet, he speaks for the first beast to convince men to follow him. This persuasion includes false prophecy, false intellectualism and pseudo miracles. This is false philosophy, false science, false theology, false religion, and false morality [note that lying wisdom ascends from the earth - James 3:14-15]. It is wisdom in the service of sin and lawlessness, and points to a unification of philosophy, mind-sciences and religion.

## MIRACLES

The miracles may be the sort of false magical signs observed in occult religions, as exemplified by the opposers of Moses in Egypt. This may include imitations of the sort of signs that the Lord Jesus performed in order to convince men to follow the beast. However, it may simply mean the power of human invention coming to fulness at the end; mighty acts of technology and science beyond the imagination of Biblical writers. Even 'fire from heaven' may refer to solving the power crisis by a sort of super-solar generator. As natural resources run out (the world's oil cannot last more than 100 years at most at current consumption), whoever discovers new power supplies in nature will hold enormous political power. Whatever they are, they are 'great' (Matt 24:24) and astonish mankind. Mankind is flooded with technological comforts, prosperity, solutions to historic difficulties and world peace so that men are persuaded to follow this world-power and not resist the dark side of it's morals. Mankind has solved its problems, all is well, so what if Christians are persecuted.

## THE IMAGE, MARK AND PERSECUTION

In these days it will be impossible to be a superficial believer; one is either a confessing Christian to be killed, or a follower of the beast. There is no middle way. The talking image of the beast and the mark ensure that all true Christians are outed and dealt with. Exactly how this figurative language is interpreted varies, but matters little. The point is that believers are identified and persecuted. This reminds us of the Roman persecutions of the church.

Many religions have their sacramental 'images', insignia or distinctive signs held by devotees. These include rosary beads for Roman Catholics, the beads and portrait of Shri Bhagwan Rajneesh, Buddhist beads, the Egyptian ankh<sup>4</sup> for certain occultists and many others. The empire forces citizens to display an image and those who refuse are identified as Christians. Faithful followers are marked out in some way, but note that the mark has been in evidence in various forms throughout history as the beast has always persecuted believers. The main point is that there is an open difference between willing followers and those who refuse to worship the beast - at the end this is put into sharp focus.

The safest interpretation is that receiving a mark speaks of ownership, just as cattle are branded. In John's day slaves were branded to show whom they belonged to. Receiving the mark here may simply mean identifying who belongs to the beast. The mark probably means 'to belong to someone' or 'to worship someone'. In Rev 14:9, 11 receiving the mark equates to worshipping the beast. The mark on the forehead and right hand represents the beast dominating the mind and actions. The mark thus simply signifies those following the beast in thought and deed. Compare in Revelation 7 that the seal on the forehead of the elect (not a mere mark) signifies those who belong to Christ, those who think like Christ, and this is an invisible testimony that speaks in heaven. It shows heaven that the elect belong to God. The voluntary marking of the followers of Antichrist therefore signifies that they belong to the beast.

Notice that the image is made by men to honour the beast, and it is the centre of worship and speaks for the beast. With the ever-expanding technology of microchips, in the future this could be explained as an item that every person carries that communicates instructions as a signet of their citizenship of the empire. Already mobile telephones can include thousands of MP3 songs, a camera, a camcorder, Internet connection and play DVDs. Some development of this technology may fit with the final symbolism of the

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<sup>4</sup> A cross with a loop at the top.

'image'. No one can be sure. There is an implication also that it hears/sees, as it identifies those who do not worship the beast. A simpler possibility is that the image merely represents a powerful new form of idolatrous paganism at the heart of Antichrist's false religion.

However, another interpretation may be that the image is connected with the devil's attempt to destroy all that is in the image of God (the church) and establish an image of Antichrist in a world power. Believers are killed but remaining mankind itself becomes the image of Satan. This is man as the concentrated force of humanistic, blasphemous self-worship and power-worship in Satan's image. An Old Testament symbol of this is the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar, whom his citizens had to worship on pain of death (Dan 3). It is ever in fallen man to change, **'the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man ... who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator'** (Rm 1:23-25).

The full truth of this matter may only be known at the end as it is of very difficult interpretation.

#### PERSECUTION

Those that refuse to worship the image are killed, but before this there are other forms of persecution. Failure to be marked by the beast results in expulsion from society and being unable to buy and sell, unable to work and eat. This may be a literal event - the mark being a licence to work - it has certainly happened before (cf. Jews in Nazi Germany); however, it may be a reference to Gospel preaching. Scripture sometimes symbolises the preaching of the Gospel as 'buying' (Rev 3:18; Prov 23:33; Isa 55:1; Matt 13:44, 25:9). Curtailing the buying power of saints may simply point to the prohibition of Gospel preaching. Why stop saints buying goods if, having been identified, they are to be killed anyway? In the run up to making the worship of God a capital offence, the preaching of Christ as God and Saviour is curtailed and made illegal. There are moves afoot within Europe that are very close to this already.

Also notice, **'I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus'** (Rev 17:6). This possibly highlights a difference between the persecution experienced in living for Christ (**drunk with the blood of the saints**) and suffering death (**the blood of the martyrs of Jesus**). It is the witness of living in suffering and the testimony of martyrdom. The Greek word *martus* ('martyr') primarily means 'a witness' in general before it means a witness by dying.

#### **Two sides of authority**

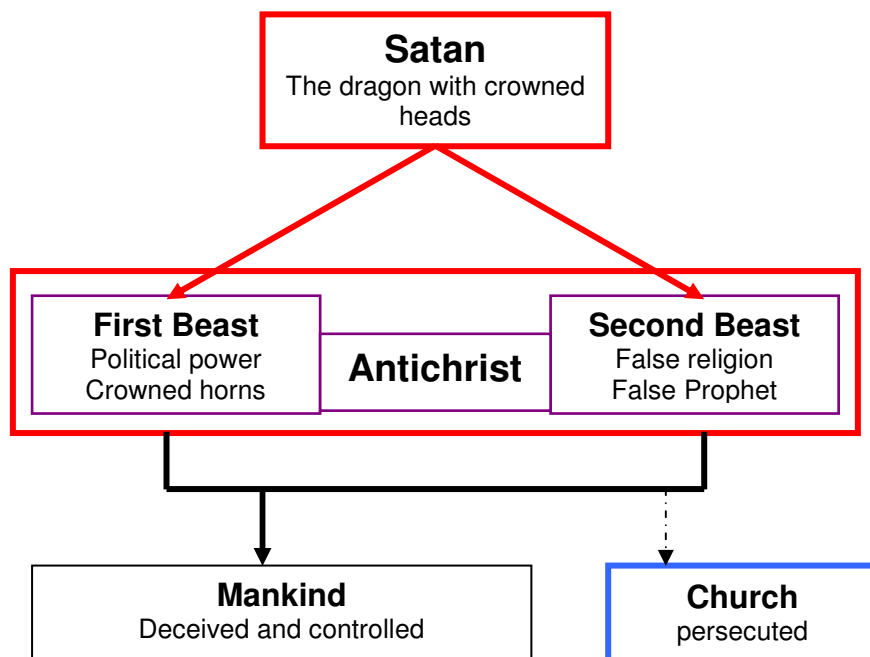
These are the two aspects of Antichrist's world power - absolute political and religious control. The first beast is a statement about the universal political power of Antichrist, the second beast explains how this power is exercised. The first is shock and awe, the second is hearts and minds. The false, Babylonish, religious and political power is later personified as the whore sitting on a fully Satanised beast in Rev 17 (the beast is now a *scarlet* beast, scarlet = sin, Isa 1:18; cf. fiery *red* dragon; openly appearing as sin). The evil of the world's blasphemous system comes to full maturity in the antichristian kingdom.

<b>Summary</b> <b>The Two Aspects of Antichrist</b>	
The first beast	The second beast; the False prophet
From the sea	From the earth
Fearsome in appearance	Meek in appearance (lamb)
Satan's executive power	Satan's deceptive power
Political power	Persuasive power
Satan's arm	Satan's mind
Rebellious, ungodly government	False religion, occultism, false philosophy

This domination, however, is strictly limited 'a short time' (Rev 17:10). The 42 months is the Gospel age; note parallel times:

<b>The Gospel Age</b>	
42 months	Rev 13:5
1260 days	Rev 11:3
Times, time and half a time	Rev 12:14
3½ years	
The period of the two witnesses: the testimony of the church in history.	Rev 11:3
The period in which the woman (the NT church) is nourished in the wilderness (the world).	Rev 12:6.
The period of the beast rising, antichrists that have gone out. The beast is always present in history.	1 Jn 4:3; Rev 13:5

**The government of Satan on earth**



Is Antichrist an individual?

Most Christians in history have said yes, and a reasonable case can be made to support this. For instance,

- Paul uses the word *anthropos* in 2 Thess 2, the usual word for ‘a man’.
- If the previous historical antichrists were men, it is reasonable to expect the final Antichrist to also be an individual person.
- Since Christ is an individual, the Antichrist will also be an individual.

However, against this we have to factor all that the end represents in the divine revelation. It is the fulness of apostasy and rebellion in the whole world, where mankind, as a whole, raises up itself against God. It is where demonic inspired behaviour, teaching, legal standards and culture reach epidemic proportions globally and where mankind as a whole stands blasphemously against the divine will. At this point man’s sin has reached its peak; the fulness of sin is evident in the world and man - as a corporate entity - becomes the apotheosis of enmity to God. ‘Apotheosis is deliberately chosen here. As well as meaning ‘a climax’, it originally meant ‘make a god of’. This is what happens at the end; the original lie in Eden that man could be as God, is consummated; in the whole world every man becomes his own god. The result is that Satan is worshipped as God universally. This is the ultimate Antichrist; mankind, God’s created vessel of self-expression, becomes its own Christ. Man worships man, and thus Satan who inspires him.

Then note that for Revelation to be the encouragement it is, and for a consistent explanation of the nature of Antichrist throughout history, the beast cannot be a specific individual who only rises at the end of time. Antichrist has been in force for all of human history; as John explains it was present in several world-empires before his time. Wherever the church is, there is the Antichrist. These previous manifestations of the beast were not simply false teachers in the spirit of Antichrist damaging the church, these empires were the beast itself. The beast is corporate.

But there are other crucial arguments to demonstrate this.

## **The importance of the temple in 2 Thessalonians**

Nearly all expositors miss this key issue.

The man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (2 Thess 2:3-4)

‘Revealed’ here is the word *apokalupto* meaning ‘to uncover’, ‘to lay open what has been veiled’. It is not the expression of something new (which the normal interpretation of Antichrist would be) but the revelation of what has long been dormant and locked inside man; - the lie of Satan that man can be god (Gen 3:5; Rm 1:25). This is the essential element in man’s rebellion which lies at the foundation of so many sins, particularly pride and rebellion. It is the root of all desires in the past for global domination and found actual expression in the deification of kings and emperors (in various civilisations not just Rome). It is also the root of many false religions, especially all that are based on mysticism and releasing the ‘divine spark within’.

‘Temple’ is not the usual word meaning the whole temple in Jerusalem (*hieron*), but is the Greek word *naos* which stands for the innermost sanctuary, the Holy Place and Holy of Holies. *Naos* is the word Paul uses to explain that believers (individually and corporately) are the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16, 17, 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21). Jesus also uses this word for the body of believers (Rev 3:12); in fact every reference to the temple in Revelation is the word *naos*. The point of this image is that it is where God dwells. It has nothing to do

with organised human religion. It is not referring to building made of stone or to religious systems, such as Roman Catholicism. It is man.

If the Antichrist is an individual, this verse poses enormous problems. Where is it that Antichrist sits? The foolish ideas of Dispensationalists that it is a rebuilt Jerusalem temple can be dismissed out of hand. Even if one were built it is not where God dwells. Neither can it be a religious system such as Romanism, God cannot dwell there either. Where is God's intended dwelling place? It is in man. Man was created to be the dwelling place of God. Since the Fall only elect believers are actually God's dwelling place, but man was created to be this dwelling.

At the end, Antichrist sits as God in the temple of God. That is the culmination of all that Antichrist does. The only interpretation that makes any sense is that this refers to mankind worshipping itself as God. Mankind, as the intended dwelling place of God, has rebelled to the uttermost and worships itself. There is a global manifestation of man taking the place of God in the world. Pride has come to its apotheosis. The world becomes the full representation of man proclaiming himself to be God.

## Daniel 7

Antichrist must be a corporate identity. It is fallen man proclaiming himself to be God. The fulness of the apostasy against God, is man worshipping himself everywhere. Daniel's prophecy fits this picture eminently:

**there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, *were* eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.**

The corporate expression of Antichrist is mankind speaking pompous words. The horn speaks of power, the eye of personal intelligence and vision (the serpent's promise was that man's eyes would be opened). Antichrist is a powerful expression of pomposity; man proud of his own intelligence, man uttering great things about himself.

The culmination and consummation of the Fall, where man initially sought to be like God, is the Antichrist, where mankind as a corporate whole worships himself and utterly rebels against God. The final expression of world-empire, is a mankind united under Satan, expressing hate to God and worshipping itself.

**He shall speak *pompous* [great] words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand For a time and times and half a time. (Dan 7:25)**

## Revelation 13

### The importance of 666 in Revelation 13:18

The mark of the beast, his name and the number of the beast are all the same - they speak of his essential character. 666 is the name or number of the beast; i.e. either as the ambassador of Satan and world ruler (an individual) or as Satan's counterfeit world kingdom (a corporate man).

Six is the Biblical number for man. Man was created on the sixth day (Gen 1:26-31). The number of man incorporates six (Rev 13:18). Six is 7 (divine perfection) minus 1, thus a failing to reach perfection. The work of man is done over six days (Ex 16:26); thus toil without rest (7<sup>th</sup> day). The 6<sup>th</sup> clause of the Lord's prayer deals with sin. There are six words used for man, four in the OT, two in the NT (*Adam, Ish, Enosh, Gehver, Anthropos, Aner*). 666 is a trinity of man; man seeking to be as God - the pride of man worshipping himself.



It is also  $6 \times 10 \times 10$  (i.e. 600) +  $6 \times 10 + 6$  (i.e. 66); three sixes and three tens. Ten is the number of fulness, completion. This is the fulness of man's hubris, the completion and maturity of failure and sin, which results in self-worship.

Notice the repetition of sixes in Goliath the idolater who defied God (1 Sam 17:4, 7) and Nebuchadnezzar's golden image representing the blasphemous glory of man (height  $6 \times 10$ , width 6; Dan 3:1); this was man (Nebuchadnezzar) worshipping himself as man. His statue was roughly ten times the size of Goliath, and the name (character) / number of Antichrist is about ten times this. 666 is the pride and idolatry of Goliath and Nebuchadnezzar multiplied.

We are told to calculate and understand this number so it is valid to seek a sane interpretation of it. There is no separate indefinite article in the Greek here, so 'a man' could just as easily be 'man'; it is the measure of man, the character of man. Therefore, it is consistent with this numeric symbolism, and the Greek words, to understand that *mankind* is meant here. The name and number of the beast is man seeking to be God in opposition to God. It is a catastrophic failure to reach the godly perfection of 777.

### Forty-two months

And he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. (Rev 13:5)

*The saints* shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. (Dan 7:25)

Notice that the period of Antichrist's power is 42 months (or  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years - time, times and  $\frac{1}{2}$  a time), and as we have seen this is the Gospel age. Before the cross anti-christian activity was focused in pagan nations and empires, often in direct confrontation with Israel as the people of God (e.g. Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Canaanites) but sometimes by alliances and thus syncretism of religion (e.g. Egypt, Syria). After the cross anti-christian activity is mainly focused upon deception and corruption of Biblical witness. As John explained, antichrists had deceived by false teaching. The spirit of Antichrist has thus been in operation throughout church history. Antichrist has been in operation for 42 months, throughout the Gospel age. Thus the indication here is that it is not one single individual. Many antichrists have gone out from the church and Antichrist as a spiritual force for lawlessness has been in operation for 2000 years. This is man in opposition to God. The Adamic nature is anti Christ; man seeking to be as God.

### The teaching of Jesus on the end

The Lord gave an extended discourse in Matthew 24 (and paralleled in Lk 21; Mk 13) on the end times. It correlates closely with Paul's accounts and Revelation 13, emphasising the prevalence of apostasy, deception and false christs. However, the Lord never mentions a specific single individual focusing the end time apostasy.<sup>5</sup> This is very significant. If the Antichrist is such a significant figure as to be a single man who rules the earth at the time the Lord returns, someone whom the Lord categorically kills with his appearing, why did Jesus not see fit to mention it at all? Those who insist on an individual Antichrist need to answer this question.

We also need to remember that it is a sound rule of interpretation to explain the obscure by the clear. Although Jesus' words were a prophecy and included a parenthesis about the fall

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<sup>5</sup> The reference to the 'abomination of desolation' (Matt 24:15) is specifically referring to the Fall of Jerusalem where this was literally fulfilled in the temple, as prefigured by Antiochus; hence the warning to flee from Judaea into the mountains (v16). The section from v15-22 relates to Jerusalem. For more details see my paper, *The Signs of the End in the Olivet Discourse*.

of Jerusalem in 70 AD, his terms are not obscure and are a straightforward answer to the disciples who were as yet not filled with the Spirit and not able to understand all things. John's words in Revelation are accepted by all to be symbolic and not easy to understand. Paul's words in 2 Thessalonian 2 are also a prophecy, and are made more difficult since he is commenting on things previously explained to this church. We do not know the details of what he said, **when I was still with you I told you these things** (v5). For instance a problem that has flummoxed interpreters for thousands of years is what is the restraint? Yet Paul mentions that he had told the Thessalonians already and they knew (v6).

Therefore, the clearer and fuller explanation of the end by the Lord himself should be our governing interpretation; and this mentions nothing about a single individual as the Antichrist.

Also note some specifics. Who is it that Christ destroys by his coming? It is mankind in general. When Paul says that the man of sin is destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming, surely this is mankind? The symbolic victory statements in Revelation (such as 19:20-21) can also be interpreted to refer to mankind in general. The beast = false government worshipping Satan, the false prophet = false religion worshipping Satan and the followers are mankind worshipping self and Satan. The two beasts become different aspects of the fulness of sin in mankind - the fulness of evil government and the apotheosis of false religion.

Below is a table to show the almost perfect similarities between the scenario pictured by Jesus and that in 2 Thessalonians and Revelation (note that Revelation is a series of cyclic parallel descriptions of the end, each highlighting different aspects of Christ's victory). If you insist that Antichrist and the False Prophet are individuals, you must explain why there is no mention of them by the Lord in his fuller and clearer statement on the end to disciples who were desperate to understand.

<b>Comparison of teaching on end time events</b>			
<b>Event</b>	<b>Matt 24</b>	<b>2 Thess 2</b>	<b>Rev 13</b>
<b>Great deception</b>	4	10-11	8, 14
False christs	5, 23	4 implied	1 (Beast = Antichrist)
False prophets	11, 24	4 implied	12 = False Prophet 19:20
False signs	24-26	9	13
<b>Great apostasy</b>	10, 12	3	4, 8
<b>Great Tribulation</b>	9, 28-29		5, 6, 7
Wars	6-7		4 (implied) see parallel passages Rev 6:4
Famines & pandemics	7		See parallel passages in Rev 6:6, 8, 18:8
Earthquakes	7		See parallel passages in Rev 8:5, 11:13, 19
Persecution of the church	9, 13	See 1:6	7, 10, 16
<b>Gospel preaching</b>	14		
<b>Lawlessness and evil governance</b>	12	7, 12	Implied in following the beast; 16-17
Satanic inspiration		9	2 (dragon)
Worship of Antichrist		3-4, 8	8
<b>Jesus appears</b>	27, 30	8	See parallel passages, Rev 19:11ff
Signs in heavens	29		See parallel passages, Rev 6:12, 13
Elect gathered	31	1	See parallel passages, Rev 7:3ff
<b>Warning to hear or watch, be prepared</b>	33, 42, 44	2, 15	9

## **The history of man comes to fulness**

God's purpose is perfect and the end of history will only come at the time of fulness in God's purposes. We see in the occupation of Canaan that the Israelites could only commit judgmental genocide when the Canaanites' sins were complete. They were ripe for judgment, just as the pre-flood world was ripe for judgment by the flood.

What began with Adam's fall developed into a race of men set in opposition to God. In his mercy, the Lord planned to save an elect remnant from mankind to create a world of men that would love and honour him. History is the period whereby God rescues these elect as they are born at different times. When the final elect member is saved, then the end comes. This is also the time that the sin of Adam also comes to fulness; what has been incipient in mankind becomes a corporate expression of Satanic blasphemy and rebellion at the end. The restraint is loosed and man becomes the pure evil he can be. This is a corporate coming to fulness.

This idea is also expressed in Jesus' parable about the wheat and tares (Matt 13:25-30, 37-43). Both come to fulness at the same time, both are harvested, but the clear difference between them being expressed in maturity means that the wheat is gathered into God's barn, but the poisonous tares (the weed 'darnel' that looks like wheat) are burned.

Jesus interpreted this parable for the disciples so that we can be in no doubt what it means. Again there is no reference to a single Antichrist, but to a corporate expression of Satan coming to maturity. The wheat is the sons of the kingdom. The devil sows the tares amongst the wheat in the field of the world, and these are the wicked. They come to maturity at the same time as the church comes to fulness. The angels then separate out these tares at the harvest for judgment by fire.

The fulness of wickedness at the end is represented by a corporate expression of mankind. Just as Revelation 13 and 2 Thessalonians, the wicked are energised by Satan and do his wicked works. This is man full of sin; mature lawlessness.

It is clear that at the Second Coming, the Lord's presence will wipe out every human being on the earth. Man being full of sin cannot stand in the presence of a glorious God. This is entirely in accord with the Antichrist being corporate mankind.

### **Christ and the body**

What is the current expression of the Lord Jesus Christ on Earth? It is the body of Christ, the church. The union between Christ and his body is so vital that any conception of the Lord Jesus Christ now must include his people, who are in Him. Any statement about Christ since the cross must involve a discussion about the body. Christ is the head in heaven at the Father's right hand ruling the universe, but his body, vitally joined to him by his Spirit, is on Earth.

So what is an eschatological Antichrist? A true Antichrist in its fullest end-time expression has to be a spiritual head and a corporate body of men on the earth. Remember this is a matter of hubris for Satan. He wants to replace Christ and be God on the earth. He wants to be all that the Son has become - he feels that this is his calling, that the glory the Son has should be his. He wants to rule Earth from his spiritual prison (*Tartarus*, the realm of the atmosphere surrounding Earth), through a body - a corporate expression of his evil nature in mankind as a whole. He then wants this body to eliminate all traces of the true Christ by killing the saints in global war.

The expression of sin in one man, no matter how vile, is not enough for Satan. He wants to be as Christ. This requires that the Antichrist is a corporate man; it is mankind in full submission to the dragon.

Now, in order to rule the world it is may be that there will be a single despotic tyrant who will have the authority to direct, control and manipulate human affairs; or control may be through a hegemony or cabal. Yet the Antichrist, as such, is mankind in submission to Satan.

### **Interim conclusion**

The exaltation of man is the root of demonic religion. Before the cross, Satan's strategy against God was: a) trying to exterminate God's people or, b) to draw Israel into open syncretism with other national religions. After the cross it was to counterfeit Christianity in one form or another from within - from external corruption to internal deception. Satanic deception seeks to bring his original occult teachings and practices (elevating man) into the church by any means. His original lie was that man could be as God and satanic religions all seek in various ways to make man his own god (even in deceptive 'evangelical' cults, such as the 'little gods' teaching in Word Faith).

Directly associated with the rise of the Antichrist is the marking of all men with his number on their foreheads. The mind of all men at the end is dominated by self-worship. Man becomes his own god. Only those who's mind is renewed by God's Spirit avoid this deception.

### **Final definition of Antichrist based on all the relevant texts**

The Antichrist is representative of the completeness of man's rebellion, apostasy and blasphemy against God that matures in the end times but has been incipient throughout history. It is the fulness of the original Edenic lie that man can be God, and thus man proclaims himself as God and worships himself in the apotheosis of hubris. In doing this man is actually worshipping Satan who controls him.

There can be two conceptions of this figure, which amount to much the same thing.

1. **ANTICHRIST IS A CORPORATE SYMBOL.** The word is merely symbolic of the fulness of mankind's pride and rebellion to God on a global, unrestrained level at he end.
2. **ANTICHRIST IS A WORLD DESPOT** who controls the final rebellion against God by focusing worship on Satan and persecuting the saints. It is of no consequence what this person is ultimately called, whether king, prime-minister, president, chairman or emperor. The point is that he is a tyrant like Nimrod.

In both cases the results on the earth are the same: opposition to God, persecution of the church, global lawlessness, worshipping of man (and thus Satan) and the fulness of sin.

A safe interpretation may well be to consider the Antichrist as both the kingdom and the king; the people and the government, the fulness of rebellious human power represented in humanity and it's leader. There are certainly places where the beast cannot simply be one man, but there are also places where there is an emphasis upon the central control of the final world-power of sinful men.

## Historic contenders for the title

### THE POPE

The almost uniform belief of the early centuries of the church was that the Antichrist would be a Jew. It was only with the teaching of the Waldenses in the 14<sup>th</sup> century that the notion of the Pope as Antichrist came to favour, mostly brought about by relentless Roman Catholic persecution. This view was followed by other persecuted pre-Reformation groups such as the Lollards and Hussites. This was also the understandable view of the Reformers, beginning with Martin Luther and his protégé Philip Melanchthon, thence Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, Johann Heinrich Bullinger; later Theodore Beza, Francis Turretin, the Puritans and then many others. It is the prevailing Reformed view to this day, enshrined in many Reformed standards. Considering the situation and Roman opposition the Reformers faced, where the papacy dominated kings and even emperors, this is unsurprising. However, what is surprising is that 500 years later this view is not subjected to better scrutiny.

### TOTALITARIAN LEADERS

such as Hitler, Napoleon, Stalin.

### ROMAN EMPERORS

that persecuted the early church such as Titus, Nero, (even a reborn Nero) or Domitian. [There were ten key persecutions of the church under Roman emperors.]

### THE JEWS

as a nation opposing God, or the religious elite in Judaism, such as the Pharisees, priests and rabbis. Another version is the union of Israel with a secular power. Many writers throughout church history have insisted that the Antichrist will be a Jew (such as Pink).

### RELIGIOUS AGGRESSORS

of the church such as Mohammed.

History has confined most of these candidates to the bin. Foolishly, in the heat of the moment, Christian teachers still keep coming up with exaggerated claims for this or that despot or system to be the Antichrist, such the Common Market or Saddam Hussein. This foolishness needs to cease. The only candidate in the above list that deserves mention is the Pope. Indeed, this office, which rules over a completely false Christian system and powerful political force, superficially appears to fit the bill.

### The argument for the Pope as Antichrist

- **MANY POPES HAVE BEEN EXCEEDINGLY WICKED MEN.** Very true and this should be condemned, but it does not establish the case.
- **THE MANY POPES ARE A SUCCESSION OF LITTLE ANTICHRISTS.** *‘The Antichrist is the pope who is alive at any given moment ... There were already, in that first century, many lesser Antichrists; but as John wrote, another was coming, the Antichrist, greater than them all.’*<sup>6</sup> The problem with this argument is that there was no papacy at the time John wrote, or for some 300 years or so.
- **THE CULMINATION OF BABYLON (REV 17:5) IS THE PAPACY.** *‘And what was that? [Babylon] Nothing less than the Papacy, the religion of the popes, the Roman Catholic*

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<sup>6</sup> Shaun Willcock, *The Antichrist*, p1; Bible Based Ministries; South Africa.

system.’<sup>7</sup> This misunderstands scripture. Babylon is a symbol of the sinful and rebellious world system, not one religion in this system. It is represented as a city, not a temple (Rev 14:8, 16:19). Babylon is the Greek form of ‘Babel’ and this represents what it stands for - the pride of man in government seeking to be God (Gen 11).

- **POPES DENY THE FATHER AND SON BY THEIR ACTIONS.** But the Bible explains that the denial of the Trinity by Antichrist is open, and widely proclaimed, not hidden in works. No pope has publicly taught the open denial of the Father or Christ.
- **THE POPE TAKES THE PLACE OF CHRIST.** This is true, by claiming to be the Vicar of Christ or even the presence of Christ on earth. However, so do very many other religious leaders, and cultic frontmen. This proves nothing, except that false religion leads people to usurp Christ’s place.
- **THE PAPACY IS THE LITTLE HORN OF DANIEL, ARISING AFTER THE TEN HORNS** (the Barbarian tribes) that smashed the Roman Empire. *‘The ten kings (or kingdoms) were the barbarian nations that overran the Roman Empire; and the little horn that came up among them, rising after them, was the Papacy, the kingdom of the popes ... in the fifth century, this restraint [the Roman Empire] was removed and then that Wicked was revealed’.*<sup>8</sup> However, the ten horns were part of the fourth beast growing out of it (Rome; Dan 7:7). They cannot be the opposers of Rome, they were part of, or emanating from the Roman Empire. Then again, this interpretation ignores the eastern part of the empire which was formed when the empire was finally split in 395; the western Roman empire continued till 731, and the eastern, till 1453. Furthermore, they are clearly secular powers, not religious. Finally, the Papacy had emerged even before the Roman emperor was deposed in 476. When Willcock states: *‘History, fulfilling divine prophecy, leaves us in absolutely no doubt as to Antichrist’s identity. It was the Roman Papacy’*<sup>9</sup> he not only misinterprets scripture but misreads history.

This interpretation, though favoured by Reformed tradition, is based on the most superficial and poor interpretation of scripture. It entails arbitrary twisting both of scripture and history. Eminent evangelical commentators agree with this.<sup>10</sup> Pink says, *‘In order to adapt the prophecies of the Antichrist to the Papal hierarchy ... they had to be so wrested that scarcely anything was left of their original meaning.’*<sup>11</sup>

### Why the Antichrist is not the Pope.

- The papacy reflects the spirit of Antichrist but is not the full and final expression of it as it does not fit the crucial texts that explain its characteristics.
- John and Paul tell us that there have been antichrists since the beginning. Yet there was no pope for several hundred years after the cross. In that time there were many false teachers who damaged the church (‘antichrists’), but these were not popes. The Roman Catholic church did not formally exist in Rome for at least 300 years. After Constantine’s Edict of Milan (313) the Roman church gradually increased in power and the Roman bishop eventually assumed power over other metropolitan bishops (such as Ephesus, Alexandria, Antioch). The first bishop of Rome to claim supreme church authority was Leo I in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. If the final Antichrist is a pope, and all the earlier antichrists were earlier popes, then this argument is contrary to history.

<sup>7</sup> Willcock, p1.

<sup>8</sup> Willcock, p1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Willcock, p2

<sup>10</sup>Such as: **Leon Morris**, *The 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistles to the Thessalonians*; Eerdmans, (1970) p220-221; **John Eadie**, *Comm. On Thessalonians*; Macmillan (1877), p340ff; **William Hendriksen**, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*; Banner of Truth, (1976) p173ff; **Henry Alford**, *Greek Testament*; (1862) Vol 3 p59ff; **AW Pink**, *The Antichrist*; Kregel (1988), chapter 1.

<sup>11</sup> Pink, op. cit. p28.

- While Paul's use of 'man of sin' in 2 Thess can be fairly construed as corporate (i.e. mankind), it cannot be explained as a formal office or a series of men bearing the same title. Thus it cannot be the papacy.
- Under the usual interpretation (not mine), the first beast (Antichrist) of Rev 13 is a political figure, the second (the False Prophet) a religious leader. If the papacy is the first beast, then who is the second?
- The reign of Antichrist is denoted six times in various forms (42 months; Dan 7:25; Rev 12:14 with 12:6, 13:5). Whatever else this means, it cannot apply to the papacy which has been operating for about 1500 years. If the 42 months is a short time at the end, the papacy has been around too long. If it is the Gospel age, the papacy has not been around long enough.
- The Antichrist (in all forms) will be accepted formally by Jews (ultimately as their messiah) according to Jesus' words in Jn 5:43, **I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.** This cannot apply to popes.
- All who receive the Antichrist as their leader are damned (2 Thess 2:12). If all the antichrists are popes, then all who have received the pope as their religious leader are damned. Yet everyone accepts that many true believers have mistakenly remained in the Roman Catholic church. Even the Reformers were Catholics for many years.
- The Pope only has power over his church, but the Antichrist has power over all the earth. Antichrist will demolish all the vestiges of pseudo-Christianity, even the superficial rituals in Roman Catholicism. The Pope could not do this. Neither does any pope set himself up as an object of worship above all else (2 Thess 2:4). By definition, any pope that tried to act in this way would cease to be a pope. The Pope's job is to acknowledge and direct men to divine authority and worship; in this he is blasphemously bold enough to be called a 'vice-regent' under God, but never an authority over God.
- John explains that a key teaching of Antichrist is the outright denial of the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. While Rome teaches many appalling doctrines, it does not deny the incarnation. Indeed formal Roman doctrine has always strenuously supported it.
- John also teaches that the antichristian spirit denies the Trinity. Again Roman doctrine has always taught an orthodox view of the Trinity, more so than some supposed evangelical Charismatics.
- Supporters of the Pope as Antichrist also see the Babylon whore of Revelation 17 as the papacy. But this woman is called '**the Mother of harlots and the abomination of the earth**'. In other words, the fountainhead of false religion. This is not true of the papacy; numerous abominations preceded her in history and many are mentioned in scripture, such as: Ashtoreth, Milcom, Chemosh, Molech (1 Kg 11:5-7). Further, the kings of the earth fornicated with her (joined to her false religion) but this is also not true of the papacy since many nations continue today with their traditional false gods. Only ancient Babylonian religion, the source of all occult faiths, suits the interpretation, not Rome. Babylon is the world's system in rebellion to God and the whore its false occult religion (see later).

### **Why this is important**

It must be emphasised that the Antichrist is not merely the Pope, whether now or in the future. To insist that it is flies in the face of scripture and history.

But there is an important practical matter here. There is a great danger of being distracted from the truth and thus being deceived into attacking the minor things and completely missing the major things.

## The Babylon harlot - the woman of mystery Rev 17:7

Those who insist that Antichrist is the Pope make much of calling her 'the whore, Babylon', as per Rev 17. It is important to correctly identify the woman on the beast called 'the mother of harlots' and 'Mystery Babylon'.

### Mystery

A mystery in the Bible can have two meanings:

1. A **SECRET** unknown to man, a hidden purpose or decree only explained by God; a mystery revealed to the initiated (Matt 13:11; Rm 16:25, 26; Eph 3:3, 6).
2. A **SIGN** or a symbol (Eph 5:32; Rev 1:20) - this is less frequent.

The woman is both; her real character and origin is hidden from men who follow her; and she is also a symbol of something else.

### A woman *and* a city

First note that she is a woman, but also a city. She has already been symbolised as Egypt, Sodom and earthly Jerusalem (Rev 11:8). This is a parody of the church which is also a woman and a city. Also, the church is the bride of Christ but this woman is a harlot. Without going into detailed argument, it is clear that this woman is a unity of two specific things:

1. **THE SECRET - SHE IS THE COUNTERFEIT CHURCH OF ALL SORTS;** the mother of harlotry. Read the prophets for the background to spiritual harlotry which is an abomination to the Lord. When Israel followed false gods she became a whore and prostituted herself, reaping the condemnation of God over and over again. All false religion is spiritual harlotry, as man was made to worship God alone. This woman is false religion, and also represents the apostasy at the end. Before the Antichrist can rule there has to be a great deception turning people away from the true church. At the end there is a powerful church calling itself Christian but which is blasphemous and rebellious. There are aspects of the Charismatic Movement which already fit this picture exactly. In the future this will increase and worsen as denominations join in and capitulate to unholy religion.
2. **THE SYMBOL - BUT SHE IS ALSO A CITY AND REPRESENTS WORLD POWER FOCUSED AGAINST GOD,** just like the origin of Babylon in Nimrod's kingdom. It is the image of the city that assumes dominance in chapter 18, controlling world affairs; especially commerce, luxury, entertainment and economics - the world system. This is why the name of Babylon is called 'Mystery Babylon' (17:5), her real power is hidden and occultic (lit. 'hidden'). The city appears as a woman to deceive by harlotry, but her essential character is the old rebellious city of Nimrod - Babylon, the founder of occult religion and the centre of man's rebellious world power. This is also a parody of the true church which appears as a woman in this dispensation but is to be the city of God, the centre of God's kingdom.



<b>Contrasts between the woman of Rev 12/19/21 and the woman of Rev 17/18/19/21</b>	
<b>Rev 12 - The Church</b>	<b>Rev 17 - false world system and religion</b>
Rules with authority (crown) 12:1	Rules over kings of Earth 17:18
Mother of male child 12:5	Mother of harlots 17:5
Satan persecutes this woman 12:3,13	Satan supports this woman 17:3, 7
The lamb's wife 19:7-8, 21:9-10	The devil's whore 17:3, 5
	Full of blasphemous names 17:3
	Persecutes the other woman 17:6, 18:24
	Deceives nations by sorcery 18:23
Pure (white linen) 19:8	An abomination (purple, scarlet, cup) 17:4
	Her sins reach to heaven 18:5
Is the heavenly city, Jerusalem 21:10	Babylon - the world 17:5, 18
Dwells with God forever 21:2-3	Condemned to lake of fire 18:8, 19:2-3, 21:8

So the woman is both false religion but especially rebellious world power - past, present and future expressed in fallen civilisation. Her appearance alters, but her deceiving ways are the same. She is the powerhouse of the Antichristian kingdom, the centre of Antichrist's operation - the woman and the beast are inseparable, she rides on the beast. As such she bears the same characteristics of Antichrist, viz. false religion and satanic political power. The woman is the heart of the antichristian empire. Note that she also sits on 'many waters', representing the peoples of the nations (17:1); and on the beast's seven heads (17:9), representing kingly power. The woman thrives on every aspect of the rebellious empire. False religion, rebellious power and the harlotry of greed lie at the heart of antichristian civilisation.

The deception of her harlotry (religion, money, luxury, entertainment, culture, vice) leads people into joining the heart of the antichristian kingdom. She is the seduction of the world, the lusts of the flesh. The woman is another symbol for the deceptive qualities of Antichrist. The seduction of the woman leads to enslavement to Antichrist. The world as the centre of enticement, luxury, hedonism and sin is always closely associated with the world that persecutes the church (cf. Rome where persecution and martyrdom became actual entertainment in the circus).

### **The mystery of the woman**

But the harlot is also surrounded by a mystery, her name involves a mystery and she is a mystery, the mystery of the woman (Rev 17:7). In Col 1:26-27 we are told that the divine mystery is the union of men with God, of the elect with Christ:

the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Their mystery of godliness is Christ in the elect, resulting in men coming to glory. The mystery of the harlot is the Satanising of society; mankind at the end becoming the fulness of sin, the manifestation of the devil. The revelation of the whore in Revelation 17 is associated with the authority and expression of the beast that carries her. The whore deceives and entices, and the result is that men become satanised. The purpose of the whore is to deceive men into following the beast - when they do they become demonic; Satan personified. This was what Paul meant when he said, you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of

disobedience (Eph 2:2). Being enticed by the world leads to spiritual corruption. Only the saints of God can escape this.

The woman's forces of political, economic, hedonistic and religious corruption entice men to enjoy worldly pleasure to their doom.

Scripture is full of warnings about association with this harlot. To give just one example:

**O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the LORD. For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob, Because they are filled with eastern ways; They *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, And they are pleased with the children of foreigners. Their land is also full of silver and gold, And there is no end to their treasures; Their land is also full of horses, And there is no end to their chariots. Their land is also full of idols; They worship the work of their own hands, That which their own fingers have made. People bow down, And each man humbles himself; Therefore do not forgive them. Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall come* upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up -- And it shall be brought low. (Isa 2:5-12)**

God forsakes Judah for:

- Being filled with eastern ways (i.e. Babylonian and Mesopotamian influences).
- Becoming soothsayers (divination, false prophecy).
- Intermarrying with foreigners (wrong association).
- Full of silver, gold and treasure (materialism).
- Full of horses and chariots (trusting in the strength of the flesh).
- Full of idols they worshipped (false worship, idolatry, pride).
- Consequently, there is divine judgment on the proud and puffed up.

These actions are the result of joining with Babylon, becoming associated with the world.

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Now people who simply see the papacy here fall into deception. There have been countless people who have vociferously attacked the papacy as Babylon but have themselves fallen into temptation to follow the world's system - which is Babylon itself (for instance in using fleshly means, luxury, avarice, hedonism, ideas, personalities, strategies, methods, arguments and character). By focusing attention on the wrong place, they have fallen into supporting the very thing they attack.

Believers must apply wisdom in these matters.

## A simple summary of teaching in Revelation about Antichrist

Item or Event	Reference	Interpretation
Arises from the abyss (bottomless pit)	11:7, 17:8	Spiritual origin of the beast - from the realm of demons and Satan (9:1-3, 11, 20:1-3).
Arises from the sea	13:1 (see 17:15)	Origin of the first beast (the political power aspect of Antichrist) from the politically unstable, warring nations, particularly pagan nations.
Arises from the earth	13:11	Origin of the second beast (the false religion aspect of Antichrist) from peaceful, civilised society; Christendom.
First Beast with seven heads	13:1, 17:3	Antichrist as a political power and despotic tyrant. 7 heads = the various manifestations of Antichrist's empires in history.
and ten horns (in general)	13:1, 17:3	Fulness of political power and final expression of sinful kingdom authority. All nations give power to the beast.
First beast like a leopard, feet were like a bear, mouth like a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.	13:2	Antichrist's empire follows on from previous world empires: Greece, Medo-Persia, Babylon. This world empire is empowered by Satan, just as previous empires were attempts to unify the race in submission to the devil.
The seven heads are seven mountains and seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. The beast is the eighth, and is of the seven.	17:9-11	Seven previous empires: Babel (Babylon) [some think Egypt but is not as important as Babel], Assyria, Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome ('one is'), one to come out of Europe, Antichrist's final empire arises from this. (See later.) [We know the '7' here is literal as scriptures lists the empires in picture form, both in Daniel and Revelation.]
The ten horns - ten kings who have received no kingdom yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. God makes them of one mind to give their power to the beast.	17:12, 17	A future alliance between Antichrist and pagan powers, not necessarily literally ten, which represents completeness, as there is no extra information. One hour = a short time within the 42 months.
The ten horns will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.	17:16	The alliance breaks down and the pagan nations attack the world empire at the end. World war.
One of his heads had been mortally wounded, but healed. The world marvelled and followed the beast.	13:3	The concept of a pagan world empire has long been considered a dead duck since Rome. Antichrist revitalises this and the world is amazed at his power and follows him.
The beast that was, and is not, and yet is. [Repeated three times.]	17:8	Refers to 13:3 above: the beast was apparent in ancient world empires but appears to have faded in intensity and is not seen, but will arise in full power. World empire appears, disappears and reappears at the end.
Beast worshipped.	13:4, 8	Partly out of fear ('who can war against him'), partly out

		of deception.
Speaks arrogant blasphemies. Continues 42 months	13:5, 6	As a Satanised being he is full of blasphemy. His power continues throughout the Gospel Age in one form or another.
Authority over all people. Wars against the saints.	13:7, 10	Full dominion of world empire, even in alliance with pagan nations who would not normally ally with a supposed Christian power. His authority is used to exterminate the true church.
Second beast from the earth, two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.	13:11	= the False Prophet (19:20). Appears like Christ but speaks like Satan.
Exercises the authority of the first beast causes men to worship the first beast	13:12	The religious aspect of Antichrist that causes men to worship Satan by worshipping him.
Performs signs and wonders	13:13	Not necessarily magical, but may be occult works of power. May be technological accomplishments to make life on earth easy.
Deceives world into worshipping the first beast Creates a speaking image for worship	13:14-15	Not literal. Impossible to say what this is exactly, but it is a means of focusing worship on the beast.
The mark on the right hand or on foreheads of all men that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.	13:16-17	Two ways of looking at this: a) economic sanctions to force into the open true believers; b) proscription of Gospel preaching (cf. Rev 3:18; Isa 55:1).
The number of the beast is 666	13:18	The number of man in trinity, man trying to be God.
The woman, whore, Babylon.	17:1-7, 18	The woman is the city Babylon, at first hidden ('a mystery'). Rebellious world power. As the harlot = false religion. The harlot-city is the powerhouse of the beast, controlling kings and deceiving peoples.

## The purpose of Antichrist and its role in history

In essence, the devil's plan is to destroy the church and assume the rule of earth, thus dominating man to his own purposes. He wants to imitate God and express his nature through a human vessel on a grand scale. As God expresses his divine nature through the church, Satan wishes to dominate the earth and manifest his sin through wicked men under his global control. Throughout history this satanic purpose has been hindered and restrained, otherwise the church would have been destroyed (see Appendix One). However, God allowed a certain measure of Satan's plans to succeed in order to further his own purposes<sup>12</sup> and to illustrate how the final expression will manifest itself.

The plans of Satan for world domination can be seen in the various attempts of certain men to create a world empire, beginning with the rebel Nimrod at Babel (Greek, 'Babylon'). For this reason Babylon is the template used in Revelation for the final world rebellion.

Revelation symbolises this warfare on the saints in chapter 12. Here the woman is the church, at first the OT church, God's spiritual authority on the earth. The dragon (Satan) seeks to destroy the woman that will birth Christ. The ten horns are symbolic of his great power, the seven crowns is his attempt to create a kingdom like God's. The child is Christ, who came from the OT church and was raised up by God to the throne in heaven. The dragon constantly sought to create a world kingdom in the OT that would destroy the people of God and prevent the incarnation, but God overruled to make these empires do what he planned; in some cases to actually reverse Satan's strategy and free the Lord's people (as in the case of Cyrus).

This satanic plan failed, but the attempts to dominate the earth through one man and kill the saints continued, but were ultimately thwarted. After God removes the restraint (Rev 20:1-14; 2 Thess 2:6-8) the kingdom of Antichrist becomes the culmination of all the previous attempts at world domination, which this time is allowed to reach completion - a world of sin opposing Christ and persecuting his church. Thus the previous attempts at world dominion typify what happens in the final expression. Indeed, Antichrist has the characteristics of three key empires: *leopard* = Greece, *Bear* = Medo-Persia, *lion* = Babylon (Rev 13:1-2 cf Dan 7), and is also linked to Rome. The seven heads, ten horns and ten crowns refer symbolically to fulness of political and kingly power in history. To understand the characteristics of the final world empire, study the qualities and history of the previous manifestations of antichristian world powers.

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, God used the Greek Empire to provide an international common language and the Roman Empire to pave the way for international peace and good communications for the spread of the Gospel.

In tabular form these attempts at world power can be listed as follows:

<b>Empire</b> Expressions of the antichrist kingdom	<b>Leader</b> Representatives of the dragon	<b>The dragon's purpose</b>
<b>Babel</b>	Nimrod	Unify the race and usurp God's role.
Some think Egypt <sup>13</sup>	Pharaoh	Destroy the chosen people, the seed of Abraham.
Assyria	Various kings	Unify the known world - defeat Israel.
<b>Babylonia</b>	Various kings	Unify the known world - defeat Israel.
<b>Medo-Persian</b>	Various kings	Unify the known world. Note: Haman's plan to destroy the Jews
<b>Greek</b>	Alexander	Unify the known world.
Syria (Seleucids)	Antiochus Epiphanes	Proclaim himself as God in the Jerusalem temple.
<b>Roman</b>	Various emperors	Unify the world, subjugate by brute force of arms.

<b>The Seven heads of Antichrist - Rev 13:1-2, 17:9-10 and Daniel 2, 7, 8</b>			
1. Nimrod's Empire in Shinar			The precedent. Confusion of tongues at Babel gives world-empire a deathblow.
2. Assyrian Empire			Arises out of Nimrod's empire at Nineveh.
3. Babylonian Empire	<b>Lion</b> - (Dan 7:4)	Gold (Dan 2:38)	Nebuchadnezzar mainly in view.
4. Medo Persian Empire	<b>Bear</b> - (Dan 7:5)	Silver (Dan 2:39)	Also ram of Dan 8:3, 20
5. Greek-Macedonian Empire	<b>Leopard</b> - with wings (Dan 7:6) Note swiftness of conquest	Bronze (Dan 2:39)	= The male-goat of Dan 8:21 and Alexander the 'large horn' of Dan 8:8, 21. The empire split into four after Alexander's death at 33, these are the smaller horns (Dan 8:22). The little horn of 8:9 = Antiochus Epiphanes. The little horn of 7:8 = Antichristian kingdom after Roman Empire ended.
6. Rome	10-horned creature with iron teeth (Dan 7:7)	Iron & Clay (Dan 2:40-43)	Iron = strength, iron mixed with clay is its inherent weakness, incompatible elements. (NB Rome's civil wars and internecine intrigues).
7. Final expression to come	'Little horn' (Dan 7:8)		

<sup>13</sup> Egypt is not pictured as a world-empire by scripture, neither is the Hittite Empire, though both were powerful with a wide influence. Some powerful tribal 'empires', such as the Etruscans, Carthaginians or the Celts, are completely ignored. This is despite the fact that the Celts were the only power to defeat both the Greeks and the Romans.

Attempts of the dragon to revitalise the Roman (European) Empire		
<b>Religious control</b>	<b>The Papacy</b>	Note that the pope is supposed to be 'God on earth'.
<b>Restored Roman Empire</b> In reality a loose federation.	<b>Charlemagne</b> , king of the Franks (a league of German tribes). Crowned by Pope Leo III as 'Emperor of the West' 800AD.	Recognised by Eastern Roman Emperor at Constantinople. From 1438 the emperor was always from the Hapsburg family.
<b>Holy Roman (Germanic) Empire</b> (i.e. Spain, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Burgundy, South Italy)	Height of Hapsburg empire with Charles V (1500-1558).	Controlled by the Pope. Crowned ' <b>Holy Roman Emperor</b> ' in 1520.
French	Napoleon	His son was called 'king of Rome'.
Russian	Czars (or Tsars)	Czar = Caesar.
German Third Reich	Adolph Hitler	

Each of these was allowed to rise and fall within the plan of God, some quickly, some after a long time.

### Note on Rev 17:9-13; The 8<sup>th</sup> Empire arising from the 7th

9 Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

10 There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.

11 And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

In general we can say that the woman (false religion in fallen civilisations) thrives in heathen kingdoms (spiritual fornication v2). This is empowered and dominated by Satan through the now scarlet beast (scarlet = sin, Isa 1:18; cf. fiery *red* dragon), through a fully satanised Antichrist as world power (kings and horns). The procession of world empires in history manifested blatant false religion, even deifying their human emperors. The 'five fallen' are the ones mentioned previously. 'The one that is' must refer to Rome, the world empire present when John wrote.

The Antichristian kingdom of perdition is the eighth, but emerging from the seventh. The problem is what is the seventh? Suggestions include the Germanic-Slavic kingdom (i.e. Charlemagne or the Germanic barbarians that overthrew Rome) or even Christendom (beginning with Constantine). Another possibility is that it represents a collective title for all governments between Rome and Antichrist, though I believe this to be unlikely as a specific empire is pointed to. There are two simple answers:

1. After Rome there is a seventh empire that has not yet been revealed. This empire will be the consummation of those that come before. Out of this Antichrist will forge a confederation with ten pagan powers (see next item) and this will form the eighth empire. This will be the full revival of Nimrod's plans for world domination with a people of one mind.

2. More likely, the seventh is Europe, which emerged from the Roman Empire over time. Antichrist thus arises from European nations.

Either way Antichrist emerges from Europe, whether via a new pan-European empire yet to be seen, or Europe considered as the historic development of the faded Roman Empire.

Identity	Daniel 7	Rev 17
Rome (6 <sup>th</sup> empire)	Beast with iron teeth - crushing power; 7:7	The king that is 'now' 17:10
Europe (7 <sup>th</sup> empire)	Ten horns; note that crushing power of teeth is distinct from horns 7:7, [20]; separate from and arising from Rome; 7:24.	The king to come 17:10
Antichrist (8 <sup>th</sup> empire)	Little horn 7:8, 20 arises from ten horns, uprooting three.	The beast 17:11; the 8 <sup>th</sup> but one of the 7.
Antichrist's alliance		Future (pagan) kings from John's time perspective; Rev 17:12-13, 20:7-8

### Europe and America

A further point ought to be made. By extension the United States can be considered as an outgrowth of Europe. Historically it had connections with Spain and France, but it was politically formed as a result of the departure of the Pilgrim Fathers from England, becoming a colony of Great Britain. It is a political outgrowth of European power. It also took the religious foundation of 'Christian' England and has thus been considered part of 'Christendom'. With Britain having lost any claim to empire, and the colonies of Spain, France, Portugal and the Netherlands having long since gained independence, it is only the United States that can claim any kind of international supremacy and is the only current world power.

### Modern observations - America

We should also note that the US has (officially) 737 military bases worldwide and more than 2,500,000 US personnel serving across every continent (as at 2005). Of these 38 are large and medium-sized air and naval bases, and this equates to Britain's 36 naval bases and army garrisons at the height of empire in 1898. It more than equals the 37 major military bases required by the Roman Empire to control its dominions at the peak of its power in 117 AD. The official total in terms of military personnel in 2005 (including domestic based but excluding Kosovo, Serbia, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar, Uzbekistan, Iraq and Afghanistan) was 1,840,062 with 676,634 support staff. Iraq and Afghanistan alone had 106 bases at May 2005. Pentagon figures also ignore British bases, which are labelled as belonging to the RAF. The true figure for military garrisons is in excess of 1,000, many of which are denied but they exist and can be costed.<sup>14</sup> These are tendrils of military imperialism.

Political commentators have said that these bases are the equivalent of historic imperial colonies.<sup>15</sup> This is, at least, the beginnings of empire, to say nothing of political influence, economic control and military interference in sovereign states for 50 years. It's direct and indirect foreign policy has led to hundreds of thousands of deaths and many more injured

<sup>14</sup> For example in Jordan 5,000 troops are secretly deployed in bases on the Iraq and Syrian borders; but due to political and religious pressure, Jordan denies that it has any. Before 2003, The US continually denied having bases in Saudi Arabia and yet maintained a fleet of easily seen B-52 bombers in Jeddah.

<sup>15</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*, Metropolitan Books (2006).



while much of this has been founded on deceit (the multiple lies of the White House are a matter of record). It also claims to be 'Christian' and wages war in the name of Christian morality. There are many parallels here with the antichristian kingdom.

### **Rev 17:12-18; the pagan alliance of kingdoms**

12 'The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful. '

15 Then he said to me, 'The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

16 And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

17 For God has put it into their hearts to fulfil His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. [Babylon]

Ten horns here refers to the fulness of political and royal power in pagan dominions.

At the end, the kingdom of Antichrist arises from a nominally 'Christian' civilisation, as Antichrist imitates Christ and deceives with powerful signs so that people think he is Christ, and he emerges from what was the remains of the Roman Empire (Europe). But significantly, Antichrist subsequently allies with pagan nations (v12) who give their power to the beast (v13). This is also mentioned in Rev 20:7-8, **Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle.** The nations, described as Gog and Magog are the pagan nations outside the influence of Christianity (the names originally referred to Gog in Central Asia and Magog as Scythian tribes).

For a short time ('one hour') Satan is allowed to realise his strategy of complete world domination, over Christian and pagan nations in alliance. The only conflict is against the church. This conflict is not just violent hostility, but also slander and falsehood - in Rev 16:13ff the spiritual forces that persuade the earth come from the mouth of Satan and the beast. The world will speak false propaganda against Christ and his church in an unprecedented manner at the end. **THE BATTLE AT THE END IS TOTALLY ABOUT TRUTH.**

At some point this alliance breaks down and world war erupts. Mad with lust and the fulness of the woman's harlotries, men turn against her. Sated with sin, men's lust turns mad with nausea. Excess turns to disillusion. Greed turns to disgust. [Note that the addiction to luxury ruined Rome and initiated its collapse.] Satan even attacks the pagan religion he inspired - all is mad; wrathful, violent and insane. During this chaos, the Lord Jesus returns. The true king destroys all that is sin and victoriously establishes the true kingdom of God on the earth. The downfall of the world's system is reminiscent of the downfall of (old) Babylon, Nineveh and Edom prophesied in Isa 13:19-22, 34:8-15; Jer 50:39ff, 51:37; Zeph 2:14. Utter devastation.

## Conclusion

In evaluating various strands of prophecy one can end up with a spinning head; especially as some terms are repeated with changed meaning. First a little horn means Antiochus, then it means Antichrist; first a woman is the church, then it is the whore Babylon, and so on. This is why there are repeated warnings in scripture for the reader to understand. It needs caution.

However, it is also not difficult to have an overview of the main strands of argument, to see the wood for the trees. What are these main strands?

1. **FULNESS OF SIN** - At the end there is a culmination, a full flowering, of sin and rebellion in mankind. The human race is utterly opposed to God and his people. Lawlessness is unbounded.
2. **DECEPTION** - The root of this is a massive deception perpetrated by Satan and worked through human means.
3. **APOSTASY** - Part of this deception will be a massive apostasy from the church and Christian principles. This will pave the way for an antichristian kingdom.
4. **LEGALISED LAWLESSNESS** - This antichristian kingdom will authorise and legalise lawlessness; society is corrupted to be the opposite of God's intention.
5. **CORPORATE REBELLION** - We can argue about whether the human means is mankind as a corporate expression, or whether it is focused on a single, wicked, global despot. In practice it makes little difference since the result against the saints is the same and the effect in the world is the same. My view is that Antichrist is corporate - it is man in total rebellion to God, the sinfulness of man having reached its fulness.
6. **WORLD EMPIRE** - Part of this process is the development of world-empire, following in the same progress of earlier world empires, and particularly the Roman Empire. Understanding more about these empires, especially Rome will help one to understand what will happen at the end.
7. **SELF-DIVINITY** - An aspect of this empire will be the development of a new religious impulse that decrees man is God (whether corporately or focused in a single Antichrist). This deception may well include miraculous signs and wonders. Worshipping this new system will be compulsory.
8. **PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH** - The World Empire will persecute believers. There is no secret rapture to whisk the church away. This is the great tribulation and it calls for perseverance.
9. **THE FINAL VICTORY OF JESUS** - The Lord descends and utterly destroys all that Antichrist is with the mere breath of his mouth and personal glory.

There can be no real argument about these points; they are basic and clearly laid out in scripture. We can argue about the fine points and other details.

### Why do we need this revelation of Antichrist in scripture?

Remember that the coming of the lawless one is with all pretended signs and deception. There will probably be a gradual formation of this empire through various means: conflict, economics, alliances etc. At first everyone will be happy about the new world government and willingly submit, even though the government is totalitarian (cf. the persistent longing for the 'old days' in Russia amongst many who are now poor). The fulness of its blasphemous nature will not at first be apparent, and many will be fooled into complete submission. It is essential, therefore, that believers understand what is going on as this empire emerges and that they resist submission to its satanic nature. They do this, not by fighting, but by refusing to worship it, refusing to vote for it and by standing aloof from it.

If the church does not understand what the Antichrist is really all about, they are in danger of following the very fulness of satanic government described in the NT. Hence the repeated warning to watch and be on guard.

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.' (Rev 18:4)

### **Where are we now?**

One question is, How far down this road have we come already? I think most commentators would say that we have begun but have a long way to go before we see the global implications. However, there has already been a huge apostasy from true Biblical principles and church life; this is truly of a level no one thought possible 20 years ago [see appendix one]. There is also growing persecution of Christians in many parts of the world, some say that it is worse than at any previous time if added up globally. Even in the UK there is a measure of persecution since people are already being locked up for preaching the Gospel in the East End of London and others are being prosecuted for stating what the Bible says on ethical issues. Then there is a massive increase of lawlessness. What is worse there are increasing cases of governments enacting laws that are in themselves Biblically lawless - creating same sex marriages, endorsing abortion, legalising witchcraft and homosexuality and so on. Then there is the appalling level of international warfare based on illegal justification (or even lies) in order to achieve an economic powerbase. Many of these things are done in the name of morality, or even Christian ethics.

However, these things are not yet global, neither are believers universally persecuted; nor has the Gospel been preached in the whole earth; nor have we seen a new political world empire. There is a way to go.

However, events are moving towards political unity, while there is a surge for tribal autonomy through military action at the same time. This is to be expected; Jesus warned of wars while Paul, John and Daniel mention empire.

What we see is old tribal loyalties affirming independence in previously unified states, such as the break up of the USSR, African colonialism and the Balkans. This has led to many wars and rumours of wars.

On the other hand since the Second World War we saw a combining of power by alliance in the Cold war. This is still evidenced today after the Cold War ended and is manifest in military actions like Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Under the headship of America, there is an alliance of Canada, Australia, the UK, European nations and even sometimes nations like Turkey, Pakistan, India and tribes like the Kurds. In opposition during the Cold War there was a variable alliance between the USSR, China, Cuba, North Vietnam, the Eastern bloc (now defunct) and a few others. However faced with economic necessity and the failure of Communism, there is an uneasy commercial alliance between eastern and western blocks that were previously antagonistic. Thus America is in debt to China and requires trade with Russia and oil from the Caspian and the Middle East. China requires technology and markets from the west. Even North Korea needs western aid.

Thus we see a gradual merging of old enemies due to economic needs. The UN was meant to be the cement between nations to prevent further world wars but is largely cosmetic. What is forging real unity is money, trade and natural resources. It is now not inconceivable that an international trade agreement could begin a unification of nations worldwide, while at the same time ancient tribal factions could initiate further local wars.

Flash points being Israel and the Middle East, the Balkans, African nations, India/Pakistan, Taiwan/China and former USSR states.

We are not at this point yet and this scenario could collapse and another emerge, such as a world war that results in an enforced unity. Such a world war could be triggered by recent events in the Middle East and would be a war based ostensibly on rival religious factions (Islam versus Christendom - not real Christianity) but would really be about natural resources - gas / oil - and a strategic power base. Either way, a unity of world nations is not inconceivable in the near future.

This empire would be the seventh mentioned by John following Rome, and would be the basis of an emerging power base for the full revelation of Antichrist.

### Warnings for believers

The purpose of giving so many warnings about the Antichrist in scripture, especially with such detailed analysis of his reign in Revelation, is to warn believers in every age to beware of contact with this world-system. By identifying Antichrist as a person Christians can completely miss the truth about what is going on in the world today and become entangled. The divine command is 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues' (Rev 18:4).

Relevant warnings for us today include:

- **BEWARE OF THE OCCULT INVASION:** for the last 100 years there has been a growing emergence of pagan occult teachings, practices and systems that have both established themselves as normal and harmless ways of life, but have also insinuated their way into Christian circles. We have mentioned the prevalence of occult techniques and therapies in medicine, business and personal therapies (meditation, martial arts, yoga, hypnosis, acupuncture etc.) but churches are adopting techniques and teachings that, quite literally, come straight from ancient Babylon. Many aspects of the Signs and Wonders Movement arise from pagan sources; indeed some of the leaders of this movement actually used occult source material quite openly. We have no space to develop this here.<sup>16</sup> The rise of the beast in the end will deceive and corrupt and is primarily targeting the church. Believers must investigate the sources of the things they accept and shun all the popular techniques and therapies that are really part of Antichrist's kingdom. This is a hugely important matter, and one that many are overlooking. There is a massive invasion of antichristian, occult practices in churches.
- **BEWARE OF WORLDLY ALLIANCES:** so many people target traditional things as worldly and avoid them (dancing, smoking, drinking, movies etc.) but allow themselves to completely fall into a worldly mindset about so much else. Churches everywhere are falling for fleshly methods to prop up dwindling numbers (e.g. music, drama, distracting computer-dominated screens, sound-bites instead of teaching, advertising, crusades, organisation, management techniques, leadership structures etc.). Believers that would never smoke find themselves addicted to TV soaps, absorbing their manipulated messages. Giving to the poor and missions is reduced while expensive foreign holidays are considered a necessity twice a year. Again we can't develop this here; the point is made.
- **BEWARE OF WHOM YOU VOTE FOR AND DO NOT BELIEVE PROPAGANDA:** so many believers are just plain foolish when it comes to the world of politics. People do no research and vote for politicians who are liars, deceivers and lead countries into committing appalling crimes against humanity under the guise of moral superiority.

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<sup>16</sup> See my papers, *Charismatic Catastrophe, Unholy Alliances & Occult Invasion*.

- **BEWARE OF WORLDLY LUXURY:** the Babylon harlot (the world's system of false religion and pride coupled with fallen culture and commerce) is full of opulence, purple, scarlet, gold, gems, ivory, spices, property, and wealth (Rev 17:4, 18:11-16) and entices men by greed and affluence. Her cup is golden but the contents are abominations that make men mad (Jer 51:7). There is nothing wrong with comfortable living if God so disposes, but there is an ungodly avarice for luxury and pleasure amongst too many people in church. It is simply accepted that believers should have all the latest technology, expensive flat screen TVs, Ipods, multiple new cars, desirable houses, named-fashion clothes etc. Worse, these expensive items are showered upon children who grow up with no idea about thrift or value. All this occurs at a time when giving to Christian charities and Missions are at an all-time low. This is a scandal. Opulence, hedonism, power and coveting of material things is a means of enticing believers into an alliance with the beast. Christians should be content, and give sacrificially; not opulent.
- **BEWARE OF FLESHLY LUSTS:** Babylon also stimulates the flesh. In her is found all forms of lust, lechery, degradation, deceit, fraud, hatred, injustice, bitterness and all forms of sin. She is the mother of abominations. Believers clearly want no part of her; and yet the fruits of Babylon are so often seen in church life. Resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness, hidden lechery, injustice, preferential treatment and even fraud and deceit are frequently evidenced in churches. It was so in the time of the apostles (Jm 2) and is today. Such behaviour, if unchecked and repented of, leads to close association with Antichrist.

If any one has an ear, let him hear. (Rev 13:9)

Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. (Rev 16:15)

### The sovereignty of God

However, all the proposals of man rest on the disposition of God; it is the Lord who is in complete control of world events from the development of empire to the smallest detail of human behaviour. Even the hairs on our head are numbered. What occurs in the future can be no worse than what has already occurred, except it will soon be global and thus greater in overall intensity. Modern Christians ought to be aware that the Lord's people have experienced persecution throughout much of church history in one form or another, in one country or another. It is only in the west for a few hundred years that believers have known relative peace, and the result today is complacency or even arrogance.

Whatever our future, we are in God's hands and he is not only the world's sovereign Lord, but he is also our heavenly Father who -

*is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. (2 Cor 9:8)*

To God be the glory, now and forever.

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# The Binding of Satan<sup>17</sup>

When does it occur?

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea.

9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book* of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20 [NKJV]

This is not a paper that discusses the various streams of eschatology. I bluntly state at the outset that my position is amillennial: that is, I am certain that sound Biblical exegesis demands that the thousand years of verses 2-7 refers to the Gospel Age, the period of time between the first and second coming of Christ. This is the period when Satan is stated to have been bound (v7-9), apart from the 'little while' of verse 3.

My reasons for this position are stated in other papers and need no rehearsal here. It is the position of sound evangelical theologians throughout church history; indeed, during the Reformation, millennialism (then called *Chiliasm* from the Greek word for 'thousand' used

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<sup>17</sup> This is a separate paper added here due to its relevance.

in Revelation) was considered so obscure and aberrant that Calvin didn't even bother refuting it at length.

Not to mention that even in the days of Paul he [Satan] began to assail it, (1 Corinthians 15,) shortly after the Chiliasts arose, who limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years. This fiction is too puerile to need or to deserve refutation. Nor do they receive any countenance from the Apocalypse, from which it is known that they extracted a gloss for their error, (Revelation 20:4,) since the thousand years there mentioned refer not to the eternal blessedness of the Church, but only to the various troubles which await the Church militant in this world. The whole Scripture proclaims that there will be no end either to the happiness of the elect, or the punishment of the reprobate. Moreover, in regard to all things which lie beyond our sight, and far transcend the reach of our intellect, belief must either be founded on the sure oracles of God, or altogether renounced. Those who assign only a thousand years to the children of God to enjoy the inheritance of future life, observe not how great an insult they offer to Christ and his kingdom. If they are not to be clothed with immortality, then Christ himself, into whose glory they shall be transformed, has not been received into immortal glory; if their blessedness is to have an end, the kingdom of Christ, on whose solid structure it rests, is temporary. In short, they are either most ignorant of all divine things or they maliciously aim at subverting the whole grace of God and power of Christ, which cannot have their full effects unless sin is obliterated, death swallowed up, and eternal life fully renewed.<sup>18</sup>

Nor do I intend to talk at length about the actual binding of Satan. Like many aspects of Revelation, it is a symbolic picture of a heavenly truth to emphasise the sovereignty of God in protecting the church and directing history to his ends. This binding is an effect of the cross of Christ to control Satan's activities so that his oppressive tactics are restrained from completely destroying the church. Just as Job suffered terribly, but did not die because God only gave Satan permission to test him but not destroy him (Job 1:12, 2:6), so the church has always suffered, but has not been wiped out. She has continued to preach the Gospel in order to ensure that the elect of every generation are brought to faith.

Satan wants to rule the earth and must do away with the church to do so. From the beginning he has desired the chosen vessel of God for personal expression - man on the Earth. The binding prevents this from taking place, until the end when God allows the restraint to be removed so that mankind on Earth is brought to judgment, having fulfilled its sinfulness (Rev 20:7; 2 Thess 2:6-12). Then the society of men becomes so evil that it fully manifests the depravity of Satan around the globe.

### **Why was Satan bound? What are the results of the binding?**

So that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished v3.

Satan primarily works by deception; he gets men to do what he wants by convincing them that they are doing what they want, what is good for them. Sin is always self destructive, it never brings good fruit, but men follow sin in the hopeless pursuit of selfish ends. They believe it will do them good by satisfying this or that craving, when all it does is promote further and more intense craving. Take any sin, and the necessary end of it is death; not just the death of condemnation for sin (Rm 6:23), but the natural fruit of it is dissolution, depression, stagnation and destruction.

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<sup>18</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book Three, p.1106.

For instance: someone who devotes himself to visual pornography for personal stimulation finds that he needs more and more intense forms to satisfy himself as time goes on. What satisfied once no longer works. Thus his viewing becomes more and more depraved. Unless checked and resisted, this progression leads not only to utter filth, but to viewing paedophilia and torture. In the end folks given over to this frequently commit suicide. The same process is seen in drug abuse, financial greed, occultism and all forms of sin.

This is the way Satan works, he deludes people into doing what he wants voluntarily. So the first result of the binding is that his deception is somewhat restrained so that his global ambitions are checked.

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints (Verses 7-9)

A second result is that the binding prevents Satan from controlling entire nations by deception so that he can gather an empire to attack the saints of God. Many times Satan has tried to gather this empire in history, but every time, against seemingly overwhelming odds, such empires have been cut off. Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Attila the Hun, the Moslem Empire, Napoleon and Hitler obviously spring to mind. At one point they sweep all before them, then suddenly they are killed or surprisingly, emphatically defeated.

Though many have tried to destroy them, God's elect have continued to this time to be a significant force in human history, even though the real power of the church is not in obvious strength, but in secret prayer.

### **The root behind Satanic deception**

The base of the deception is to divert a person from the truth of God and get them to ally themselves with the devil. Even though the benefits of peace with God are clear if considered objectively, even if there are good examples of believers with grace and order in their lives, Satanic deception encourages folk to avoid submission to God and to serve Satan via sinful indulgence.

Consider the case of drug abuse. The facts surrounding this issue are now well known and publicised; everyone knows the dangers of smoking crack cocaine or injecting heroin, even the psychotic results of smoking marijuana are now well documented. Furthermore, almost every schoolkid in an UK urban school will know personally someone who is in trouble with drugs - so rife is it in the playground today. Yet despite all this evidence, masses of kids are taking drugs. It is crazy but it is prevalent. The only reason why this happens is the deception behind drug taking - a quick satisfying hit that numbs problems and gives pleasure for a while.

The same is true of sexual promiscuity. All kids know the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases, all are aware of the lethal effects of AIDS and yet there is a veritable explosion of fornication amongst very young children. This is not only seen in the teen pregnancy statistics (the UK having the worst) but is obvious to anyone in a city centre on a Friday night. The appalling sight of drunken 16-17-year-old-girls calling out for sex with anyone in the middle of a high street is not only shocking, but is commonplace. It is now unusual for girls to be virgins beyond the age of 14 in the main cities of Britain.



What sins do is place people in the hands of the devil. As they worship their chosen sin, they worship him. As they give themselves up to drink, drugs, sex or whatever, they give up on God. Furthermore, one sin often leads to another and another. Drug abuse frequently leads to poverty and then stealing. Fornication leads to unfaithfulness, transmission of diseases and adultery. Drunkenness can lead to violence, anger, apathy, depression or destitution, depending upon the personality of the drinker.

### **What happens when the restraint is loosed?**

We have already seen what the binding does, so when the restraint is taken away these things flourish:

- Widespread deception, ultimately from Satan but also a general atmosphere of deception in many areas of life.
- Encouragement to sin.
- Worship of Satan, at first covertly and hidden amongst other sins, but gradually more overtly.
- Hostility towards the church, eventually culminating in physical persecution. This presumes an approaching end to the Gospel testimony of the saints, **When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.** (Rev 11:7)

### **Are there other texts that talk about this period of deception?**

Indeed there are; foremost is probably Paul's statements in 2 Thessalonians:

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,  
10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

(2 Thess 2:6-12)

This indicates that as the deception increases there is a revelation of the lawless one, who is identified with Antichrist:

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming. (1 Jn 2:18)

Now, this paper is not a discussion of Antichrist and I want to refrain from delving into that subject here. Suffice to say that as the end approaches, as the deception heightens, there is a revelation of Antichrist in the way John explains in Revelation 13 and 17. This coming of Antichrist is associated with:

- The working of Satan with deceiving signs and miracles. (v9)
- Unrighteous deception, i.e. deception that leads to sin. (v10)
- An avoiding of the truth, hating of truth - especially the truth as it is in Jesus. (v10)
- Strong delusions. (v11)
- Believing the lie. (v11)
- Pleasure in unrighteousness. (v12)

We need to investigate this lie of verse 11. This is the ancient lie of the serpent in Eden that if man follows Satan he will become as God, knowing good and evil - i.e. having personal freedom and becoming godlike.

**For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. (Gen 3:5)**

This is the lie referred to by Paul in Romans 1, often missed in many translations that use the indefinite article instead of the definite 'the'.

**Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Rm 1:24-25)**

A characteristic of the lie in the end is going to be a focus upon becoming like God as a result of practices and teachings that are human ideas and not the Gospel.

Paul goes on to explain that this lie, far from making people like God, renders them into slaves of Satan and results in vile passions:

**For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.**

**(Rm 1:26-32)**

One of the results of following this lie is that deception leads to sexual sin, and particularly homosexual sin. A result of the removal of restraint is a proliferation of:

- homosexual behaviour
- unrighteousness
- sexual immorality
- wickedness
- covetousness
- maliciousness
- envy
- murder
- strife
- deceit
- evil-mindedness
- treachery and gossip
- God is hated
- Violence
- Pride
- Boasting
- inventions of evil things
- disobedience to parents
- lack of discernment, forgiveness, mercy, love and trust
- hypocrisy.

While these are shown as the normal behaviour of sinful men throughout time as a result of the fall, they are specifically shown to be the result of the lie. When the restraint is removed, this lie will again be prominent and thus all these things will resurface with renewed vigour.

Another passage is the warnings of Jesus regarding the end.

Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt 24:3-14)

From this we can see other features of the removal of the restraint at the end:

- There is widespread deception.
- There are false christs that deceive many.
- There are various wars.
- Various nations attack other nations.
- There will be pandemic infections.
- There will be great famines.
- There will be serious earthquakes that distinguish them from the regular earthquakes throughout history.
- Christians will be hated.
- Christians will be betrayed.
- There will be many false prophets causing deception.
- Love, and the virtues associated with it, vanish.

A final passage is again by Paul:

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. (2 Tim 3:1-9)

In the last days when the restraint is removed we will see:

- Perilous times
- Selfishness
- Love of money
- Boasting & pride
- Blasphemy
- Disobedience to parents

- Thanklessness
- Unrighteousness
- Lack of love
- Unforgiveness
- Slander
- Lack of self-control
- Brutality
- Good hated
- Treachery
- Love of pleasure rather than love of God,
- A form of godliness that denies salvation.
- Making captives of gullible women

So from all this we can see that the removal of restraint results in: a massive list of bullet points. This long list needs to be reduced down; perhaps this form will suffice:

- **Unrighteousness:** unforgiveness, good hated, slander, treachery, gossiping, lack of love, hypocrisy, malice, wickedness, evil-mindedness, pleasure in unrighteousness, lack of discernment forgiveness, mercy, love and trust, inventions of evil.
- **Disobedience:** to parents, encouragement to sin.
- **Selfishness:** no self-control, thanklessness, covetousness, envy, hedonism, love of money, boasting & pride; love, and the virtues associated with it, vanish.
- **Violence:** brutality, murder, strife, warfare, unprovoked attacks.
- **Deceit:** widespread deception, ultimately from Satan but also a general atmosphere of deception in many areas of life; deceptive practices, making captives of gullible women, strong delusions
- **Ungodliness:** blasphemy, hatred of God.
- **Sexual sins:** homosexual behaviour, sexual immorality.
- **False religion:** open worship of Satan, a form of godliness that denies salvation; a focus upon becoming like God as a result of occult practices and teachings, false christs, false prophets, deceiving signs and miracles.
- **Opposition to Christ and his church:** Christians will be hated and betrayed, hostility towards the church culminating in physical persecution, hatred of truth - especially the truth as it is in Jesus.
- **Societal problems:** Perilous times, various wars, pre-emptive strikes on other nations, great famines, pandemic infections, serious earthquakes.

So, evidence of the restraint removed is a time when all these things are prominent, following a time of relative quiet, and (at least a superficial) godliness. Is this in the future, or is there a period when these things can be said to have emerged?

It is my contention that all these items are in full operation now and have been growing in intensity in the last 100 years. We could write another paper just listing the events that have conspired to bring this about, but we will mention but a few here.

### **The change in the crossover to the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a break from the tradition of trusting in God and honouring the Bible. Before then, Queen Victoria could boast to a visiting Indian prince that the British Empire was built upon God's Word. Victorian society may have had a seedy underbelly, but this was an underbelly and the unrighteousness of the back streets was

condemned in decent society. Church attendance (even if many were only professing Christians) was as high as 95% of the population. There was even an honour among thieves that became a byword. Certain crimes prominent today were unheard of and unknown.

As the century had drawn to its close, there was a new offensive against God that would have lasting effects. This offensive drew forces on many fronts. First there was the attack of Darwinism. The hypotheses of uniformitarianism, evolutionary theory, the geologic column, man's descent from apes etc. changed the way society viewed the Bible and God. It became scientific, and therefore rational, to question the Bible and be atheistic. This was a revolution in human behaviour. Previous societies may have opposed the Christian God but no intelligentsia had previously questioned the very existence of God himself. Worse, the claim that man is just an animal caught in a fight for the survival of the fittest made morality redundant. Whatever helped the individual survive became endorsed by science. This led to situation ethics whereby anything was justifiable if it resulted in the desired objective. Many other changes resulted from evolutionary theory that had a massive effect on society, education, warfare, politics and so on. The resultant theory of eugenics even paved the way for Hitler's Final Solution of genocide. Man had lost his bearings as a rational creature created by God with a purpose in his life, a life that should be lived in obedience to conscience and divine commands.

The First World War of 1914-18 changed the world forever. Not only did it generate many questions about God's sovereignty that such a thing could happen, but it also had huge ramifications for the future of Europe in the way the nations were arbitrarily divided up at the end. The present problems in Iraq and the Balkans have much to do with what happened then and the seeds of the next world war also were sown by the unwise terms of the treaty with Germany. The disillusionment caused by the brutality and cost of the First World War is hard to imagine. It changed everything, and following hard on the heels of Darwinism, many saw no further point in following God.

While all this was going on, liberal scholars had been growing in temerity. Throughout the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and into the 20<sup>th</sup> modernism began to invade the religious world. The effect of the various theories, many based upon evolutionary ideas, was to state that: God is dead, the Bible is not the sure word of God, miracles didn't happen, creation was by accidental means, Jesus did not exist, early Biblical books were not written when the Bible said that they were, indeed they were written hundreds of years later. Even the Gospels were stated to be cobbled together by various unknown authors and then used to put over the views of certain schools of thought.

Coupled with this, in 1885 a new version of the Bible appeared that for the first time was not based upon the same family of manuscripts as all the previous translations. This is to say that for 1900 years no one had known the real words of the Bible. Two ancient manuscripts were the basis of this new textual theory, originally stated by Westcott and Hort, yet these manuscripts reveal thousands of contradictions, corrections and errors between them. From this a whole new stream of translations began to appear that for a hundred years poured forth from the presses. Today there are dozens of Bible versions and no standardisation. Some of these versions are so bad that they beggar belief - yet often they sell in millions.

Also this period saw the unexpected rise in popularity of the occult. Everyone had thought that paganism was dead, but a group of writers and a few occult organisations brought a new lease of life to the ancient religion. Gerald Gardner was responsible for the revival of witchcraft and is the biggest influence on pagan and witchcraft groups. By the 1950s

British society responded by repealing the Witchcraft laws. Other groups such as the Theosophical Society, Rosicrucianism, Mesmerism, Freemasonry, New Thought, Vedanta Society and others either sprang into life or received a shot in the arm. But it was not just pagan groups that emerged, brand new religions sprang into being in the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as Bahai, along with a myriad of cults that grew out of formal Christian churches: The Watchtower Society (JWs), Mormons, Christian Science, Unity School and many other smaller groups. Within the realms of evangelicalism there was also revolution with the development of the Pentecostal churches and the Charismatic Movement. Again the influence was subjectivity against the objective word of God.

As if that wasn't enough, a whole new science appeared, that of psychology, coupled with a new pseudo-science - psychoanalysis, a technique based upon occult conceptions and methodologies mixed with unproven assumptions and fabricated evidence (in, at least, the case of Freud). People no longer needed a pastor or a church support structure, they could pay to see a 'specialist' to talk to whenever they wanted. A multi-million dollar industry was born. The fact that the overwhelming evidence shows that it did virtually no good to anyone in 100 years appears to be irrelevant; it was another blow to the church.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the net result was that paganism was the fastest growing religion in the UK while Christian denominations bled 2,000 members a week and less than 7% now attend church. Some denominations like Methodism face extinction in a few years, while others (like Anglicans) are up against impending bankruptcy and internal breakdown.

With the collapse of confidence in the church, the Bible and even in God generally, the very roots of society were relocated. No longer were Biblical principles the foundations of education, the legislature, societal mores, or personal behaviour. Over and over again common sense and God's law was abandoned in favour of the ideas of men, usually psychologists. Such was the basis for the repeal of the laws against homosexuality and the legalisation of abortion.

To take one case: various generations of schoolkids became guinea pigs for experiment after experiment, most of which failed miserably. For instance, reading standards for current English children is at its worst ever level since the old-fashioned methods of parrot fashion pronunciation and reading were ditched in favour of word association and chance. Worse was the emphasis upon human rights and the abolition of corporeal discipline. This led to teachers having no control over children at all. As wayward kids disrupt classes, the corollary is that kids that want to learn are unable to do so. The government is faced with massive problems in dealing with thousands of delinquent children, so they leave them in schools to cause more problems. Violence is such a dilemma in many schools that ordinary children are so scared that they carry knives to defend themselves. In this situation, where it is not uncommon for kids to throw chairs at teachers or beat up other kids, the most vulnerable people in society become victims of drug dealers, proselytising groups (like Scientologists), violent whims out of sheer frustration, crime and underground culture.

Sick of school, children emerge at 16 into a dark world of dumbed-down lostness, pervaded by one thing after another that nullifies their brain and individuality. They succumb to a music culture that is full of abusive and foul language, which has a beat that deadens the mind and lyrics that promote drug abuse, bigotry, hate and crime. The scene they mix in often leads to violence and criminality. With nothing to do in sprawling housing estates they turn to social destruction and delinquency. From this it is a small step to adult gang culture and full-blown criminality.

The lack of any moral absolutes prevailing in schools or many homes, coupled with the lack of parental guidance (parents either don't care or are too busy trying to make a living to be able to juggle all the plates) leaves these kids lost. Having only their teen culture and diabolical (literally) music and media to learn from, they treat important things as trivial. Sex is nothing to them - just a physical act, honour is meaningless, trust is weakness. All these things ultimately arise from evolutionary theory.

The result of all this (and we have only quickly scanned a few areas of life today) is all the things we listed as a result of the restraint being removed. The society we live in exhibits all these Satanic inspired items - and it grows worse by the day. We never thought we'd live to hear of a teenager mug an old lady in her home and then rip her heart out of her chest. We never thought we'd hear of sick men commit acts of paedophilia on six-month-old babies. We never thought we'd hear of teenagers raping an old woman in her home. Who would have thought that the mightiest power on earth, with a Christian political base, would destroy an entire Iraqi city (Fallujah), killing hundreds of innocent people just for the sake of a handful of insurgents who escaped anyway? Who can justify a pre-emptive attack on a sovereign state that results in the deaths of over 100,000 (some reports say 600,000) innocent bystanders on the premise of a lie? We could go on and on.

### **Conclusion**

It is my conclusion that the restraint has indeed been taken off Satan and he is growing in his ability to control the world through evil individuals and corrupt governments. The Iraq War would not have been possible even 20 years ago, but now it seems that governments can get away with anything. The condition of our society is plain for every sane person to see. Folk, and especially older people, are continually heard to say, 'The world has gone mad?' Despite governments telling us that things have got better, we all know that things are getting worse and worse, at every level.

All the items on the previous list - from unrighteousness to selfishness, from violence to sexual sins, from false religion to disobedience, all these things are with us in spades this very day. That the restraint on Satan has been removed is very clear, and it ought to have been clear when the world had its first world war, something unheard of in history.

This proves that the restraint was taken off Satan during the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also means that the world is moving into its final stage of history and that the only anchor to our souls in this time, is God. The more the world degenerates, the more we need to cling to him and honour his word.

**Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.**

Luke 21:28

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