

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Class

“Attributes of the Antichrist”

Introduction:

A fascination with the Bible’s teaching about the end of this world often includes a focus upon the final and ultimate opponent of Christ and God’s people, the one that the Bible calls “Antichrist.” We see an example of this in the character of Nicolae Carpathia, a main character in the popular “Left Behind” series of fictional books based upon an unbiblical view of the end times and Christ’s return.

Even if we are not living during the time this Antichrist is active at the end of this world’s age, we are constantly to be vigilant because the spirit of antichrist has been opposing God’s people since the time of the early Christian church.

I. Indications of the Antichrist in the Bible

A. Daniel 7:7-8, 19-25 (pages 1383-1385); 8:23-25 (page 1386-87) and 11:36-39 (page 1393)

The vision that God gave to Daniel in the 6th century BC includes descriptions of world powers and leaders which would arise centuries after Daniel’s time. The last of these in Daniel’s visions was the Greek Seleucid king Antiochus Epiphanes IV. During his occupation of Palestine around 167 BC he so desecrated the temple in Jerusalem and so offended the Jews by his pagan ways that they revolted against him.

Under the family of the Maccabees, the Jews were an independent nation for about 100 years until the Romans occupied their land. The person of Antiochus as described in Daniel 11 flows also into a description of the final opponent of God’s people whom the New Testament calls “Antichrist.”

B. Matthew 24:15-25 (pages 1538-1539)

Jesus picks up where Daniel left off. What Daniel had prophesied to happen in the future Jesus is speaking of as having happened in the past, that is, the desecration of the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC. But now Jesus is applying this person and event to the future, to what will happen before the end of the world.

Verses 17-18: Why can’t we go get a few things? _____

Verse 22: Why are these days of distress “cut short”? _____

Verse 24: What will “false Christs” and “false prophets” be able to do? _____

C. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 (page 1843)

The Christians in Thessalonica took to heart Paul’s teaching of the return of Christ to a fault. They believed that He was coming back so soon that some of them quit their jobs and stopped working (3:10-11) as even happens in our time when people fall for a “prophecy” of the impending end of the world. As they saw fellow believers passing away, they feared that they would be “left behind” when Christ returned (1 Thessalonians 4:15). In writing this second letter to them Paul attempts to clear up their misunderstandings about the end times. The “day of the Lord” (verse 2) was a phrase used by Old Testament prophets (e.g. Joel) for the end time return of Christ for judgment.

Verse 3: What must happen before the “day of the Lord” comes? _____

Verse 4: How is this “man of lawlessness” described?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

Verses 6-7: What is the one who is holding back the secret power of lawlessness? _____

Verse 8: Who will destroy this “lawless one”? _____ **How will He do it?** _____

Verses 10-12: Why do people who follow the “lawless one” perish?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

(An example of this from the Old Testament is the Egyptian Pharaoh at the time of the exodus. He both hardened his own heart against God’s Word and God also confirmed that hardening in him.)

D. I John 2:18-23 (page 1900)

With the coming of God’s Son in human flesh, God’s revelation of salvation is complete. There is no need for further revelation. It is the last hour and there is to be an urgency in our faith and witness. One way that we know it is the last hour is the presence of many antichrists. John writes as the early heresy of Gnosticism is taking hold towards the end of the first century AD. This false teaching said that the Son of God came into the man Jesus only at his baptism and left before his crucifixion, thus denying His full humanity. The Christ came to reveal secret knowledge. Those “elites” who had this knowledge were then above sin and could do whatever they wanted.

Verse 19: From where had these “many antichrists” gone out? _____

Verse 20: What is the “anointing” that God’s people have received? _____

Verse 22: Who is the “liar” and the “antichrist”? _____

(It is more important for us to recognize and reject antichristian teaching than for us to get worked up by trying to identify who is or is going to be the Antichrist. We might be looking for something in the future while the teaching of the Antichrist is flourishing right under our noses!)

E. 1 John 4:1-3 (page 1902)

John continues to write against the Gnostic teaching that was threatening the faith of early believers.

Verse 1: Why are we to “test” the spirits? _____

Verse 2: How can we recognize the true Spirit of God? _____

Verse 3: How can we know the spirit of the antichrist? _____

Verse 3: When is this spirit coming into the world? _____

F. 2 John 7 (page 1905)

What does John call those who do not acknowledge Jesus as coming in the flesh? _____

What else does John call them? _____ (same false teaching as he addressed in 1 John)

G. Revelation 13:1-8 (page 1927)

This vision (singular) given to the Apostle John around AD 90 during a time of Roman government persecution of early Christians portrays in five different cycles the heavenly and earthly war between the victorious Lamb of God and His saved people against the defeated devil and those who have chosen to join in his spiritual rebellion. In this chapter we see the unholy trinity of the dragon (Satan), the first beast (Antichrist) and the second beast (false church on earth).

Verse 2: This end time beast combines the four beasts of Daniel 7 into one.

Verse 3: Whom is the beast trying to imitate? (see 5:6) _____

Verse 4: “Who is like the beast?” is the opposite of the name of the archangel Michael, “Who is like God?”

Michael had fought against and defeated the dragon in chapter 12 and hurled him from heaven to earth.

Verse 5: “forty-two months” is three and a half years; this is half of the complete number of seven. This beast, Antichrist, has a limited authority and power that is within the control of God’s timetable.

Verse 8: Who are these “inhabitants of the earth?” _____

Who are not included among them? _____

(These are the same as the “elect” of Matthew 24:22.)