

Identifying the Antichrist

In a book entitled *World War III*, J. W. White wrote: "The prime mover in the events that will march man into World War III will be the Anti-Christ...a terrible personification of evil who will work more wholesale havoc than any other human being in the history of the world."

White, Hal Lindsey (author of *The Late Great Planet Earth, There's a New World Coming*, et al.) and other dispensational premillennialists have done their work well in convincing a religious, but biblically illiterate, "Christian" community that such a person as described above will indeed torment the world and hasten the start of the much-feared Battle of Armageddon. Let us examine these claims under the perfect light of God's word.

Following is every occurrence of "antichrist" in the Bible:

* *"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"* (I John 2:18).

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

* *"And 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"* (I John 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"* (II John 7).

When most people discuss the antichrist they confine their discussions to wild misunderstandings of the imagery in the book of Revelation -- a book that never uses the term! It is also interesting to note the glaring differences between the premillennialist's description of the antichrist and the Bible's description.

- (1) According to the Bible there were many antichrists, not just one.
- (2) Those antichrists already existed in John's day, as opposed to being yet future to us.
- (3) These antichrists were false teachers in the church, not political dictators.
- (4) *Anyone* that denies that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the son of God, and/or that he came in the flesh can rightly be called "antichrist".

The antichrist is not a political dictator that starts World War III. When John wrote of the antichrist, he was addressing something that his readers could and would recognize -- something that was a threat *to them*. Anyone who denies that Jesus is God's Son, or the Messiah, or that he came in the flesh could rightly be called an antichrist. Let us not be swayed or frightened by false teachers who *"draw away disciples after themselves"* (Acts 20:30) by *"wresting the scriptures to their own destruction"* (II Peter 3:16).

- by Eddie Parrish (edited)

Is It Right to Criticize Another Person's Religion?

It's not only right to criticize false religion, no matter whose religion it is; it's the faithful Christian's responsibility. Jesus criticized the Pharisees for *"teaching as doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:7-9). Paul criticized those who tried to bind the shadows of the Mosaic law on New Testament Christians (Colossians 2:16-23). Peter warned that false teachers would *"secretly bring in destructive heresies"* (II Peter 2:1-3). Elders and preachers are to rebuke sin and false doctrine (II Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:10-14). Christians are to *"contend earnestly for the faith"* (Jude 3), while having no fellowship with sin and error (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

Today many people have the mistaken idea that if someone believes in God and worships Him sincerely from the heart, it's unkind, unloving, and unchristian to criticize his religious

practices. But false doctrine (Ephesians 4:14), ignorant worship (Acts 17:23), and vain religion (James 1:27) do exist, and all the sincerity, zeal, sacrifice, and devotion in the world will not make wrong things right (Acts 26:9-11). Many sincere, zealous, religious people are going to be very surprised on Judgment Day when they are rejected by the Lord (Matthew 7:21-23).

Actually the sincere religious person who is unknowingly following the commandments of men is in greater spiritual danger than the irreligious reprobate in the gutter, because at least the reprobate knows that he's lost. To save those who are in religious error, someone must speak the truth. Obviously, he must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), but speak the truth he must.

- by Kevin Kay

'That's Just Your Opinion'

Often, when in discussions about religious subjects, someone will respond to an argument by saying: "That's just your opinion." This typically indicates that the respondent does not have a good answer for the case that has just been presented, and they are trying to dismiss the force of the reasoning by simply labeling it as 'opinion.'

Those who make this dismissive statement need to understand that it is their burden to prove that the matter under consideration is mere opinion. If there is no factual or real basis for the argument that has been made, then let them show this. But, if they cannot, then the facts in evidence must be accepted and acted upon. Unfortunately, this seldom happens.

On the other hand if a thing can be proven to be only human opinion there remain several options:

1. If you detect that someone is trying to bind their opinions on others, or trying to equate their personal opinions with the actual truth of God's Word, then this must be immediately and forcefully opposed. When some were trying to force their view on circumcision, Paul said "we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Galatians 2:5). We should do the same.
2. Everyone who holds an opinion has a reason for doing so. If, as they explain their position, you become convinced that it is reasonable – even potentially helpful – you might decide to become of that same opinion. As long as no one elevates this to a matter of necessary doctrine, such opinions can, and sometimes do, serve a useful purpose.
3. Even if you are not persuaded of the other person's opinion, you can agree to 'dwell together peaceably' if both you and he can agree that this properly belongs in the area of personal conviction. If no one is guilty of 'despising his brother' (Rom. 14:3) then both parties can continue to share the positive benefits of fellowship.

- by Greg Gwin