



A Publication of CJF Ministries and Messianic Perspectives Radio Network

# Messianic Perspectives<sup>®</sup>

*God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.*

## IS THE ANTICHRIST ALREADY AMONG US?

### PART II



**BY GARY HEDRICK**

In Part I of “Is the Antichrist Among Us,” we introduced the subject of the Rapture and what signs—if any—will precede it. We also learned that date-setting extremists not only discredit the teaching of the Rapture, but also encourage some to ignore it altogether. We must remain true to Scripture! That warning applies equally to our next topic—that of the Antichrist.

## Is the Antichrist a Protestant Invention?

The NT talks about “many antichrists” coming in the end times. The Apostle John wrote, *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* (1 John 2:18).

John didn’t want anyone to labor under the delusion that conditions will be rosy up until the advent of the final, end-time Antichrist. So he explains that other “antichrists” (with an explanatory, small “a” supplied by the translators) will precede him. There have been many antichrists (that is, many people in opposition to the Messiah) throughout the past two millennia. However, that doesn’t mean there won’t be a final, singular Antichrist (with a capital “A”). What John says here is that many antichrists will precede the final Antichrist and help prepare the way for his deceptions.

Some of our critics have suggested that the notion of a single, end-time Antichrist was concocted by Protestants as an outlet for their anti-Vatican animus (some 19th and 20th century Protestants alleged that the Pope was the Antichrist)—and that the teaching of a singular, flesh-and-blood, end-time Antichrist distorts the Scriptures. However, the late Fulton J. Sheen, a controversial yet widely respected Catholic leader in the last century, disagreed:

The Antichrist will not be so called; otherwise he would have no followers . . . He will come disguised as the Great Humanitarian; he will talk peace, prosperity and plenty not as means to lead us to God, but as ends in themselves . . . He will have one great secret which he will tell to no one: he will not believe in God. Because his religion will be brotherhood without the fatherhood of God, he will deceive even the elect.<sup>23</sup>

It seems somewhat far-fetched to suggest that a Catholic archbishop would adopt and defend something that was nothing more than a fictional, Protestant concoction.

Throughout history, God has used people to do His work. But He’s not the only one. The devil also uses people to carry out his sinister plans. One key to understanding future prophecy is to know something about these key players in the end-time drama—on both sides.

Our topic in this study requires that we focus on the dark side.<sup>24</sup>

## The Anti-Messiah

On the side of darkness, the ancient prophets mention three specific personages—an evil, counterfeit “trinity,” of sorts<sup>25</sup>—whose efforts in opposition to God will intensify just before the Messiah’s return at the end of this age.<sup>26</sup> They are:

- The Dragon—A reptilian metaphor for the devil himself (Rev. 12:1—13:4, cp. Gen. 3:1-14)
- The Antichrist (or the Beast)—A powerful Roman/European political leader (13:2)
- The False Prophet—An influential, globally recognized, interfaith religious figure (16:13, 19:20)

We’re focusing on that second figure on the list. Who is he, really? What do we know about this Antichrist?

## Hollywood Distortions

In our Western culture, popular caricatures of the end-time Antichrist have been shaped by dramatized Hollywood productions like *End of Days*, *The Omen*, or *Rosemary’s Baby*, rather than by the Bible.

In these fictional portrayals, the Antichrist is a shadowy figure who’s the spawn of Satan (in some cases, literally) and possesses frightening, diabolical powers. His persona is menacing, macabre, and malevolent. He may even have “666” tattooed on his hand or forehead. When he walks past a garden, flowers wilt! He makes babies cry when he’s in their presence! His eyes flash like lightning! Even frightened animals scurry for cover when they see him coming!



Fulton J. Sheen  
Fred Palumbo

## Messianic Perspectives®

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*Messianic Perspectives* is published bimonthly by CJF Ministries, P.O. Box 345, San Antonio, Texas 78292-0345, a 501(c)3 Texas nonprofit corporation: Dr. Gary Hedrick, President; Brian Nowotny, Director of Communications; Erastos Leiloglou, Designer. Subscription price: \$10 per year. The publication of articles by other authors does not necessarily imply full agreement with all the views expressed therein. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). Visit us online at [cjfm.org](http://cjfm.org). Toll-free OrderLine: (800) 926-5397.  
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The Bible, however, portrays this pretend “messiah” somewhat differently. For one thing, he won’t be frightening or intimidating—at least, not at first. I don’t know who would want to catch a fly; but an old saying nonetheless reminds us that it’s easier to catch the tiny creatures with honey than it is with vinegar. It means we can win people over to our side more easily by being nice to them. The Antichrist knows this very well and will use it to his advantage. His charisma and eloquence will enable him to manipulate people and get his way. After all, doesn’t the Bible tell us that the forces of darkness employ cunningly devised plans and methods in achieving their objectives (Eph. 6:11)? One of the devil’s most brilliant strategies is to present himself not as a menacing monster but, rather, as a charming, disarming “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). He knows that he can advance his agenda more effectively by cultivating a nonthreatening public image.



The inference, then, is that the Antichrist will be charming, intelligent, and silver-tongued. People will like him; he will be a natural leader. And I hope this goes without saying, but I’ll say it anyway—he won’t be known as “the Antichrist.” In *The Omen* series, his name was Damien Thorn; but as we all know, that’s pure fiction. No one knows what his name or title will be. He might be a government official in Europe with an office in Brussels or The Hague. Or he could be a multinational business magnate with operations in London, Rome, and Beijing. There are countless possibilities. But no matter where he’s from, or what his occupation is, we can be certain there won’t be a bronze plate on his office door that says ANTICHRIST.

And he won’t have horns or a red tail! Chances are, if the Antichrist went strolling through United Nations Plaza in New York City, he would be fashionably and appropriately attired and wouldn’t stand out from any of the other smartly dressed businessmen and officials milling about. He would have a winsome and persuasive personality and if you made eye contact with him, he might flash a broad smile.

The Bible provides another clue when it tells us that the Antichrist will succeed in achieving something that has eluded some of the leading statesmen (and women) of our time—namely, peace in the Middle East (more about its elusiveness later). Such an accomplishment would be impossible unless he was likeable and relatable, and was perceived by all parties as honorable, reliable, and trustworthy.

## Will He Know He’s the Antichrist?

We’ve already said this man won’t be known by the biblical terms (like “Antichrist” or “Beast”). More likely, he will be greeted as “Mr. President,” “Mr. Prime Minister,” “Mr. Secretary,” or something along those lines. Another interesting question is this: Will the Beast know who he is? Will he have a strong sense of identity and be singularly focused on what he’s been called to do? Or will he be more of a dupe who remains clueless while he’s manipulated by unseen, sinister forces?

The dupe scenario is difficult to square with Scripture. The texts seem to indicate that he’s self-aware and knows what he’s doing. He’s laser-focused, and every move he makes is carefully and cunningly calculated. The elaborate song and dance he does to persuade the Israelis to sign on to his seven-year Mideast peace plan must be a thing of unparalleled beauty. Unspecified concessions apparently are effective<sup>27</sup>—and the Israelis sign on to the agreement! But after only three and a half years, this same guy does an about-face, betrays the Israelis, and a multinational military force occupies Israel.<sup>28</sup>

In all likelihood, then, the Antichrist will be keenly aware that he’s on a mission. In his mind, he may well think he’s a force for good. He may not see himself as “evil,” per se. One notable property of evil is its seemingly limitless capacity for self-justification and self-deception.<sup>29</sup> The Antichrist, like his boss (the Dragon), will be self-deceived.

## The Desire of Women

Daniel makes the following statement about the coming Antichrist: *He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all* (11:37).

Some prophetic writers have taken the phrase “desire of women” to mean that the Antichrist will have no natural desire for women; hence, he will be either androgynous (a disorder where the patient has no male or female sexual identity) or a homosexual. John Gill thought this phrase pointed to the Pope, who forbade the Roman priesthood to enjoy a normal marital relationship. Other scholars say it’s a reference to Tammuz, the Babylonian god of fertility. But these are all unlikely interpretations of this verse.

This is another one of those instances when it’s helpful to look at the verse from a Messianic perspective. In Jewish history and tradition, every Jewish girl hoped and dreamed that she would give birth to the promised Messiah.<sup>30</sup> He was “the desire of women”—i.e., the one they desired. After countless generations, Miriam (Mary) finally became the chosen one. Luke says the angel came *to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”* (1:27-28).

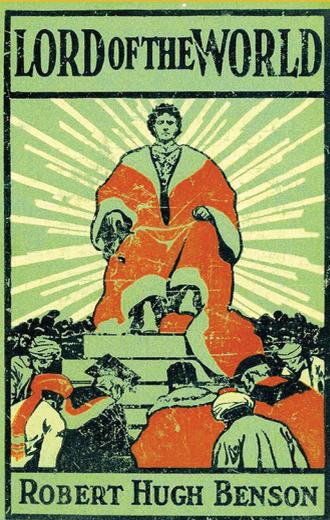
Mary was “highly favored” and “blessed among women” because the hopes, prayers, and dreams of young Jewish maidens through the ages had found their fulfillment in her.

If “the desire of women” in this verse is the Messiah, then, Daniel is saying that the Antichrist will set himself in opposition to the soon-to-appear Messiah and His followers during the Tribulation Period. He will also be the ultimate narcissist, for the text says he will exalt himself above any other person or deity.

# STORIES ABOUT THE ANTICHRIST

Stories about the Antichrist and events surrounding the end-times seem to crop up every few decades, often triggered by world events. Most draw on the biblical idea of an evil world dictator, calling him the Antichrist, and then tell of the horrors that the world—and especially the Church—will endure at his hands. Few authors are actually true to the complete biblical account; most use the Bible simply as a jumping-off point for their apocalyptic narrative. The following ten stories are some of the better-known accounts from the past 100 years. Their inclusion here does not imply our agreement with the authors' conclusions. We urge our readers to examine the Scriptures for themselves, to “see whether these things are so” (see Acts 17:11).

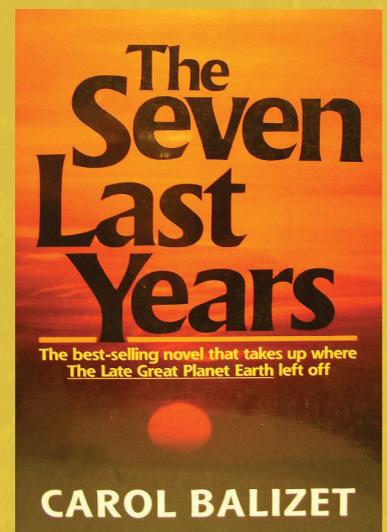
## *Lord of the World* By Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson, 1907



Benson, an Anglican convert to Catholicism, envisioned a 21st-century world driven by the godless philosophies of Marxism, and Secular Humanism—a frighteningly accurate portrayal of today’s world. In Benson’s story, religion has been driven from the public square, euthanasia is legal, and believers are persecuted and put to death as traitors. Amid the growing fear of war between East and West, Benson’s Antichrist—Julian Felsenburgh, a charismatic young American politician—rises to power. Felsenburgh elevates man above God, and promises utopian peace, eventually gaining control of a united Europe. He quickly shows his true colors, however, by persecuting the remaining “true” (i.e., Catholic) Christians. He destroys Rome, and Armageddon looms in Israel where the new Pope and a few remaining bishops in Nazareth take their final stand against Felsenburgh. *Lord of the World* is said to be one of Pope Francis’s favorite novels.

## *The Seven Last Years* By Carol Balizet, 1978

Balizet predicts economic, social, and moral chaos following a meteor strike on the Island of Cypress. She urges her characters to resist evil by embracing and proclaiming the Gospel. Her Antichrist is a radical American theologian and bishop named Uriah Leonard who rises to international prominence after setting up a food distribution program to assist those affected by waves of natural disasters. The Rapture occurs in the midst of the disasters, but goes virtually unnoticed in the chaos. The action follows the lives of several individuals in Florida during this time of tribulation. Bishop Leonard eventually takes over a morally and theologically failing Catholic Church, becoming America’s first Pope—Sixtus VI (666). His next goal is to become the political ruler of the world. Pope Sixtus, eventually revealed as a Satanist and a Jew, is assassinated and comes back to life, with his body serving as host to Satan himself.



## *Titan, Son of Saturn: The Coming World Emperor* By Joseph Birkbeck Burroughs, 1905-1911

### TITAN, SON OF SATURN

THE COMING WORLD EMPEROR  
JOSEPH BIRKBECK BURROUGHS



Burroughs wrote this shortly before the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. In the preface of the book, he identifies Titan (the Antichrist) as a young Greek Hebrew who conquers the world. Titan will claim to have been resurrected from the dead and therefore, deserving of worship. When Christians refuse, Titan unleashes a terrible worldwide persecution, and attempts to destroy the Church (see Preface 1907 edition, Pages 4-5).

Burroughs’s Antichrist is the resurrected Antiochus Epiphanes, who first desecrated the Jewish Temple in 167 BC. Titan sees the Land of Palestine as a convenient buffer state between the hostile empires of Russia and England. His seven-year covenant with the Jewish people permits them to rebuild their temple and live in peace if they manage to raise sufficient money to cancel the Turks’ debt. The Jewish people fulfill their obligation, and are governed by a Muslim ruling from Jerusalem.

## *Beast: A Novel of the Future World Dictator* By Dan Betzer, 1985

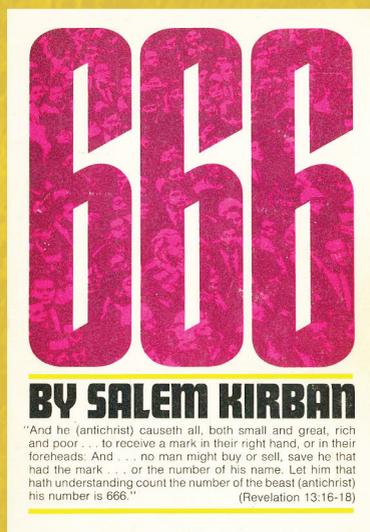
Jacque Catroux, the brilliant head of the European Economic Community, learns that Satan is his father and expects him to succeed where his other son, Adolf Hitler, failed. After the US president is taken in the Rapture, agnostic liberal vice president Barry Cane makes a pact with Catroux to merge the economies of Europe and the US. Cane implements the Antichrist’s rules and uses the IRS to impose a “shopping permit” and a number required to transact business. Unfortunately, the story ends with Catroux’s rise to power.

Beast;: A novel  
of the future  
world dictator

Betzer, Dan

666

By Salem Kirban, 1970

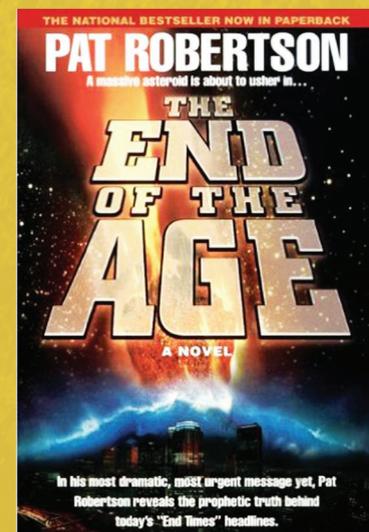


A child is named “666” after being born at 6 p.m. on June 6 in a manger in Babylon. Known to the world as “Brother Bartholomew,” he hides his Muslim background, gaining prominence by railing against international capitalism, and by bringing peace to the Middle East. He also becomes head of a united World Church. His regime enforces abortions and gives a branding mark to replace all the different numbers people must remember today. He beheads those who resist and is a master of using the media for his propaganda purposes. Bartholomew launches an attack on Jerusalem, while the anti-Semitic Russian premier also attacks Israel. Divine intervention causes both to fail. Many Jews turn to faith in the Messiah, and ultimately, the Antichrist cannot stand against the returning Jesus.

*The End of the Age*

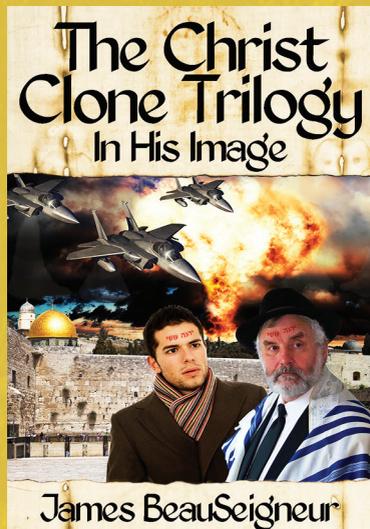
By Pat Robertson, 1995

After various natural disasters wipe out the West Coast, the US president commits suicide. After his VP is murdered, an obscure congressman named Mark Beaulieu becomes president. In his early years as a Peace Corps volunteer, Beaulieu had come under the influence of the Hindu god, Shiva, who promised Beaulieu wisdom and power as he destroyed “all the corrupt nations of the world—including America and all its greedy capitalists.” Beaulieu fills his administration with various radicals and foreigners with terrorist sympathies, effectively destroying the US government from within. Beaulieu is assassinated but miraculously resurrected on live TV, convincing all but a small remnant of Christians and Orthodox Jews that he is the Messiah. He tries to force Jewish people to submit to Shiva worship and assembles an army at Megiddo, but God intervenes and sends the archangel Michael to crush Beaulieu.



*The Christ Clone Trilogy*

By James BeauSeigneur, 1998

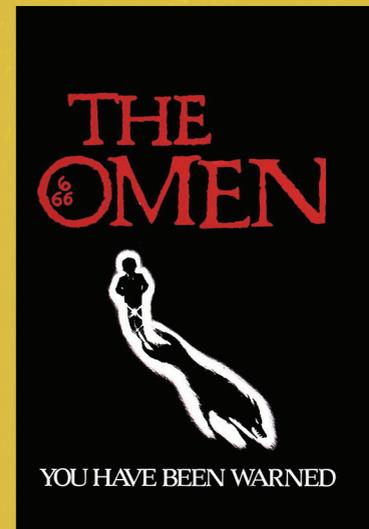


Professor Harold Goodman takes dermal cells found on the Shroud of Turin and creates a clone of Jesus. After the professor dies, little Christopher (the clone) is raised by others. Initially kind and good, Christopher falls under the evil influence of the UN and a group of twisted mystics known as the Lucius Trust. As chaos increases in the world (Israel is invaded by Russia, nuclear war and drought kill millions), Christopher offers the world peace and eternal youth. He appears to be the Messiah ushering in the Millennium, but religious zealots recognize Christopher’s utopia as a New Age counterfeit. They resist him, leading the world to Armageddon.

*The Omen (Film)*

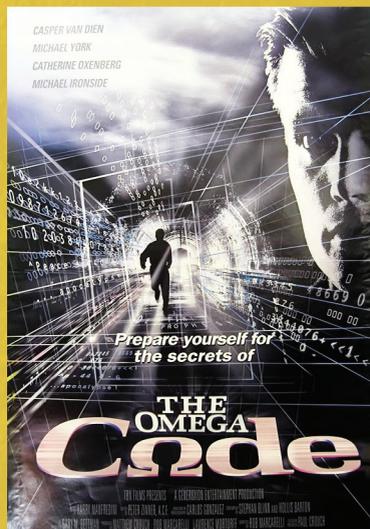
Original story by David Seltzer, 1976

This bizarre horror tale (part of a trilogy) follows the story of Damien Thorn, said to be the son of Satan. He is adopted by the American ambassador to Britain and educated by witches and sorcerers. He is bright, but evil, and comes to realize that he is the Antichrist. Damien is politically ambitious and becomes the head of the largest multinational corporation in the world, ultimately seeking to rule the world. Damien can be eliminated only by one of the seven daggers of Megiddo. The final conflict takes place in an ancient Celtic chapel, where a female BBC correspondent finally plunges one of the daggers into Damien.



*The Omega Code*

Released by Trinity Broadcasting Network, 1999

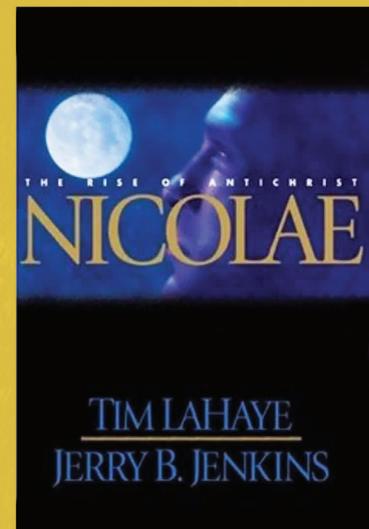


Stone Alexander uses his wealth and influence to work for world peace. As EU chairman, he recruits New Age “human potential” speaker Dr. Gillen Lane. Together, they succeed in uniting the world. The newly revived Roman Empire under Stone signs a seven-year peace treaty with Israel who has also made peace with the Arabs. Israel rebuilds the Temple on the site of the recently destroyed Dome of the Rock. Stone learns the path to world power is found in ancient codes hidden in the Torah. When Stone is accidentally shot dead, he is resurrected and possessed by Satan. Lane and others now recognize him as the Antichrist, and the Second Coming of Messiah forces Satan from Stone’s body after he orders a nuclear attack on Rome.

*Left Behind Series (Book 3: Nicolae: The Rise of Antichrist)*

By Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye, 1995-2007

This Antichrist is presented as Romanian-born Nicolae Carpathia whose charisma, intelligence, and gift for languages skyrocket him to power on the world stage. But all is not as it seems; Carpathia secretly consults Satanists. As Secretary-General of the UN, he signs a peace treaty with Israel and eventually becomes Supreme Potentate of the Global Community. Mid-Tribulation, Carpathia is assassinated, but resurrected before scores of witnesses. Satan takes possession of his body as Carpathia declares himself to be God. After three and a half more years of the Great Tribulation, Carpathia seeks to wipe out the believing remnant hiding in Petra, and to conquer Jerusalem, taking it as his new world capital. However, the Lord returns and defeats the Antichrist. The devil is cast out, and Carpathia is forced to kneel and declare that Jesus Christ is Lord before being cast into the lake of fire with his false prophet.



## Will He Be Jewish?

Before we leave this verse, we should take this opportunity to ask if the Hebrew word for God here (*Elohim*, as in “*Elohim* of his fathers”) indicates that the Antichrist will be Jewish. This, in fact, is precisely what some commentators claim; however, it’s a weak argument because the Hebrew name *Elohim* isn’t limited only to Jewish contexts in Scripture. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, for example, invoked the name of *Elohim* (2 Chron. 36:13); and of course, he wasn’t Jewish.<sup>31</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible, it’s reasonable to expect even a generic reference to God (or a pagan deity) to appear in Hebrew. It doesn’t mean the God of the Antichrist’s ancestors was Yahweh, the GOD of Israel, and that he himself will therefore be Jewish. The plural *elohim*, in fact, can be translated “gods” and its use in Daniel 11:37 would be consistent with a reference to a European leader whose ancient forebears were polytheists.<sup>32</sup>



Donald Trump  
Gage Skidmore

## Where Is the Master Negotiator When Israel Needs One?

Current aspiring presidential candidate (and multimillionaire business magnate) Donald Trump first made his mark in the 1980s with his book *Trump: The Art of the Deal*, co-written with journalist Tony Schwartz.<sup>33</sup> To this day, he considers the book his greatest achievement and says his negotiating skills are his most valuable asset.

Even Mr. Trump, though, would have his hands full trying to negotiate peace in the Middle East. Note some of the previous attempts, all of which have failed:

- The United Nations tried to secure peace in the Middle East during the aftermath of the Six-Day War. Its ill-fated Resolution 242 (1967) could not broker real peace.
- In the 1970s, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made Mideast peace a priority of the Nixon Administration. During his first two years in office, Kissinger made an unprecedented 11 trips to the Middle East but ultimately failed to secure a peace agreement.
- Carter, Begin, and Sadat tried their hand at it with the Camp David Accords (1978)—and Sadat was assassinated not long afterward. Relative peace between Israel and Egypt has nevertheless endured well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sadly, though, it hasn’t helped much with relations between Israel and the Palestinians. Egypt has erected its own security barrier along the Gaza border to keep out Palestinian infiltrators.
- Another serious attempt at peace was the Oslo Agreement (1993), with Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat signing on the dotted line. But the ink wasn’t even dry on the paper before Hamas rejected the agreement and started a campaign of deadly suicide bombings targeting Israeli civilians.
- In 2000, President Clinton brought Ehud Barak and Arafat together at Camp David. But the negotiations fell apart because the Palestinians insisted on a return to the pre-1967 borders. Another Intifada (Palestinian uprising) ensued.
- The so-called “Roadmap to Peace” (2003) was proposed by the Quartet (the US, Russia, the EU, and the UN) with Condoleezza Rice acting as President George W. Bush’s surrogate in the negotiations. The plan was never implemented, in spite of Rice’s heroic, good-faith efforts. Each side blamed the other for the failure of the talks.
- In 2010, President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton tried to jump-start the Mideast peace process. Obama initially said that they expected to secure an agreement within a year; but even with the participation of Arab heavyweights like President Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdullah of Jordan, negotiations ended in gridlock.
- Later, John Kerry and his State Department tried to restart the process where Clinton’s team had left off—but the talks were suspended by mutual agreement in September. There was a bit of irony in the fact that the two sides finally agreed on something substantive—namely, that the talks were over.

As we can see, peace in the Middle East has eluded every political administration in our lifetime, in spite of the efforts of some of the most brilliant minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Therefore, it’s doubtful that even a self-proclaimed master negotiator like “the Donald” would succeed in forging a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

But if we’re reading Scripture correctly, the Antichrist will finally get it done. It will be an impressive feat because he will have succeeded where everyone before him has failed. For the first time in centuries, there will be peace in the Middle East! Evidently, the Israelis will be so pleased with the arrangement, they will entrust the Antichrist with their national security. Sadly, it will turn out to be like leaving the fox in charge of the henhouse.

# CONTRASTING MESSIAHS<sup>34</sup>

YESHUA THE TRUE MESSIAH	ANTICHRIST (COUNTERFEIT)
Descended from Heaven (John 6:38)	Will ascend from the Abyss (Rev. 11:7)
Came in the name of the Father (John 5:43)	Will come in his own name (John 5:43, cp. Matt. 24:5)
Was despised by the world (Mark 10:33-34, cp. Isa. 53:3)	Will be acclaimed, idolized, and worshiped by the world (Rev. 13:3-4)
Came in humility as a servant (Phil. 2:7-8)	Will come in pride, claiming to be God (2 Thess. 2:4, Dan. 11:36)

## Authentic vs. Counterfeit

The Antichrist's early interactions with the Israelis—including his ability to get them to sign on to his Mideast peace plan—suggest that his true character won't be evident at first. But as the Tribulation progresses, it will become increasingly clear that he's up to no good. The naïve Israelis will be shocked back to reality when he cancels his agreement with them after only three and a half years and clears the way for an international military force to occupy the Jewish State.

It will finally become clear that the Beast isn't the benevolent peacemaker he portrayed himself to be. Neither will he be a friend of the Jewish people; on the contrary, he will be a Hitler-like, vicious anti-Semite. He and the Dragon (the devil) will know that if they can wipe out the Jewish people, God won't be able to keep His promises to Abraham. The reasoning is sound and the plan is brilliant; but it will fail.

See the chart above for how the NT distinguishes between the true Messiah and the Anti-messiah.

## The Antichrist's Destiny

Indulge me for a moment, please, while I turn my imagination loose to fill in some of the blanks in this scenario. First, the Antichrist's career will be meteoric; that is, he will rise and fall quickly—within a matter of 10 or so years. The world's first introduction to him will be when he emerges as an economic or political leader somewhere in the European (Roman) world. He will earn worldwide acclaim when he successfully mediates a seven-year Mideast peace agreement. During the next three and a half years, Jewish people from the worldwide Diaspora will return en masse to share in Israel's newly won peace, prosperity, and security.

Only half way into the agreement, however, the Antichrist will renege on it and clear the way for an epic, anti-Semitic campaign against the Jewish State—one that will exceed even the Nazi Holocaust in its horrific scale and brutality.

After three and a half years of persecuting the Jewish people (i.e., seven years after the original peace agreement is inked), a huge, multinational military force will encircle Jerusalem, like a voracious lion closing in for the kill after stalking its prey. This will all be orchestrated by the Antichrist (or the Beast), utilizing whatever resources are at his beck and call, and all indications are that the USA—for whatever reason—will be in no position to intervene.<sup>35</sup>

Just as the scales fell from Saul's eyes, allowing him to see again (Acts 9:18), millions of Israelis will finally recognize that Yeshua is their Messiah. God will touch their hearts and the scales of unbelief will fall from their spiritual "eyes." Gospel seeds that have been sown in Israel (and around the world) for centuries by Messianic ministries and congregations will germinate at long last.<sup>36</sup> These precious Jewish people will finally come to understand that accepting Yeshua doesn't mean they have to "convert" to traditional Christianity and forget their Jewish heritage. They can still be Jewish and live as Jews! After all, the Messiah himself is Jewish!

Virtually the entire nation will be "born" (or born again!) in one day.<sup>37</sup> The Apostle Paul anticipated this glorious day when he said that the time would come when "all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26). He said it would be like "life from the dead" (v. 15).

When these masses of new Israeli believers, realizing their dire predicament, call out for God to save them, Yeshua will descend from the stratosphere over Jerusalem and destroy Israel's enemies in one, fell swoop. Everything the Antichrist has been scheming for years to accomplish (i.e., the destruction of Israel) will be undone in a matter of moments at the close of the Armageddon Campaign:

*Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*

*His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.*

*He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.*

*And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*

*Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

*And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS . . .*

*And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army (Rev. 19:11-16, 19).*

Here in San Antonio, local historians tell us that the final battle of the Alamo, from the first shot to the last, only lasted for around 20 minutes. In the movies, though, it's dramatized to make it look like it dragged on for many hours.<sup>38</sup>

There's no such exaggeration in the Book of Revelation, however, and no protracted theatrics. The forces arrayed against Israel are quickly and unceremoniously destroyed:

*Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

*And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh (v. 20-21).*

Is the Antichrist already living among us? As we said near the beginning of this study, if we are as far along in God's end-time program as many of us believe, the answer is yes—he very well could be.

However, his “secret identity” isn't really what matters the most.

## What's More Important than AC's Identity?

Whether we fully understand it or not, we play an important role in these end-time developments—and in the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. Even if the prophecies aren't fulfilled until long after we're gone, we'll still be in the picture when it finally happens. Do you find that hard to believe? You shouldn't.

Here's how it works. We saw earlier (in endnote 36) that God says His Word never returns to Him void (Isa. 55:11).

So as we share the Good News of Yeshua the Messiah with our Jewish friends and loved ones during our lifetime, both here and around the world (including Israel), we are planting seeds in Jewish hearts that will germinate someday and blossom into new life.

Paul applied this pattern of planting, watering, and harvesting to his own ministry:

*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?*

*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*

*So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:5-7).*

It's like dropping a pebble in a placid pond and watching the ripples of water extend outwardly in a seemingly endless cascade of tiny waves. That's how our influence lives on—even long after we're gone.

What an amazing thought! If we're faithful in sowing the seed, God takes our simple, meager efforts and multiplies them in a way that will glorify Him and ultimately usher in a new world. Hallelujah!

*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal. 6:9, KJV).*



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CJF Ministries.*

<sup>23</sup>*Communism and the Conscience of the West* by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen (Garden City, NY: Country Life Press, 1951), np.

<sup>24</sup>In the Bible's worldview, the cosmic conflict between God and the devil is presented as a clash between light (good) and darkness (evil). See Acts 26:18, Romans 13:12, 2 Corinthians 6:14, and 1 Thessalonians 5:5. This same theme is found in the pre-Christian Dead Sea Scrolls (The War Scroll 1QM, “The War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness”).

<sup>25</sup>All three members of this dark “trinity” appear in Revelation 16:13, suggesting that they are distinct yet interrelated entities.

<sup>26</sup>*Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time”* (Rev. 12:12).

<sup>27</sup>One such concession may be permission to rebuild the Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount. Such a bold move could placate the Orthodox community, a small but powerful political bloc in Israel without whose endorsement a peace pact would almost certainly be impossible.

<sup>28</sup>We readily acknowledge that visualizing some of these possible end-time developments requires a healthy dose of speculation and imagination. For example, how does the Antichrist jockey himself into a position where he can desecrate the Jerusalem Temple, as described in Daniel 9 and Matthew 24? No one knows for sure how it'll happen. One possibility is that the Beast's seven-year peace treaty will include a provision that the EU or the UN (or some successor entity) will station peacekeeping forces in Israel under the Beast's control while the IDF virtually disarms. (Or maybe not!) All we know for sure is that the Beast will somehow be in a position to impose his will on the Israelis at the midpoint of the prophesied seven-year period: “In the middle of the week, or after the first three and one-half years, the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, leading to a time of unprecedented persecution of the Jewish people (Matt. 24:21, Mark 13:19) as well as followers of Jesus (Rev. 7:14) that will last for another three and one-half years (Dan. 7:25, Rev. 11:2-3, 12:14, 13:5)” (*The Moody Biblical Commentary*, Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham, eds. [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014], 1307). The Apostle John further notes that even in the midst of all the evil and upheaval of the Tribulation Period, God keeps the Dragon (Satan) and his Beast (the Antichrist) on a short leash: *It was granted to [the Beast] to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation* (Rev. 13:7, emphasis added). The Antichrist is ultimately only able to carry out his agenda to the extent that God—the highest authority—allows.

<sup>29</sup>Lucifer has convinced himself that he can successfully topple God from His throne. Just think—the devil knew God intimately and even had a place in the heavenly throne room (Job 1:6-7). Yet he turned to evil and began to aspire to replace God as the Sovereign of the cosmos. The evil one took a heavenly host with him when he defected (Rev. 12:4),

and he later carried out a covert operation in the Garden of Eden that resulted in the infection of the human race with his sin and rebellion (Gen. 3:1-6). Historical rulers like the ancient kings of Babylon and Tyre followed in Lucifer's footsteps by deceiving themselves and imagining that they could stand in place of God (cf. Isa. 14:12-15, Ezek. 28:11-19). The King of Babylon, incidentally, can be seen as a type of the latter-day Antichrist, who will head a commercial/political confederation of nations also known cryptically in the prophetic texts as “Babylon” (Rev. 13:4, 14:8, 16:19, 17:3-6).

<sup>30</sup>The phrase ‘the one desired by women’ (*hemdat nāšim*) has been variously interpreted. A literal translation of the phrase would be ‘the desire of women’ and also could be rendered as ‘that desired by women,’ or even ‘the desire for women.’ Mauro felt that ‘the one desired by women’ alluded to Christ because Jewish women desired to be the mother of the Messiah, and the context of the verse seems to support this interpretation. On either side of the phrase are statements concerning Antichrist's contempt for God and religion. It would not be surprising to find a reference to the rejection of the Messiah in this setting” (Steven R. Miller in *New American Commentary: Daniel* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994], 307). Another, similar term for the Messiah is “desire of nations” (Hag. 2:7).

<sup>31</sup>The Hebrew Bible also uses *Elohim* in its rendition of the Assyrian King Sennacherib's message to the inhabitants of Judah (2 Chron. 32:15).

<sup>32</sup>See also 2 Chronicles 32:19, where *The NASB Study Bible* translates *elohim* as “gods” in the phrase “the gods of the peoples of the earth.”

<sup>33</sup>*Trump: the Art of the Deal* by Donald Trump and Tony Schwartz (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987).

<sup>34</sup>This chart is based largely on information gleaned from Michael Youssef's blog for Friday, September 26, 2014 (“The Antichrist and the Muslim Mahdi [Part 1]”), accessed at [michaelyoussef.com](http://michaelyoussef.com).

<sup>35</sup>For an alternative yet intriguing interpretation of how the end-time scenario might play out vis-à-vis Israel, see “Is Jewish *Aliyah* Back to Israel Something That Christians Should Encourage and Support, in Fulfillment of Jeremiah 16:14-16?” by Ted Montgomery at [tedmontgomery.com](http://tedmontgomery.com).

<sup>36</sup>*So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it”* (Isa. 55:11).

<sup>37</sup>*Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, She gave birth to her children”* (Isa. 66:8).

<sup>38</sup>The siege of the Alamo went on for 13 days in 1836. Many historians say the final battle under the red flag (signifying “no quarter”) lasted for 20 minutes or less. Incidentally, the Alamo is only six blocks from our CJFM offices in downtown San Antonio.

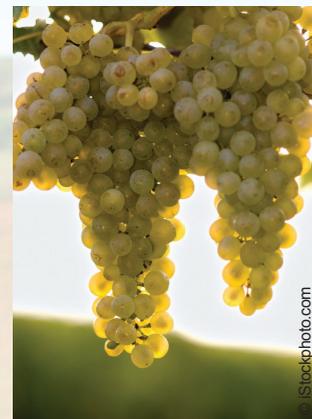
# CANDIDATES FOR ANTICHRIST IN ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES

- ✓ **JUDAS ISCARIOT**—One theory postulates that Judas, the betrayer of our Lord, will be resurrected to assume the mantle of the Antichrist in the end times. In many ancient languages, individual letters had numerical equivalents (like A = 1 in Latin or א = 1 in Hebrew, and continuing on through these respective alphabets). If you add up the numerical equivalents for the translation “Judas Raised” (not exactly his name, but these people don’t get bogged down with details!) the result is 666—the legendary “mark of the beast” (Rev. 16:2, 19:20). If you think we’re making this up, check it out at [ridingthebeast.com](http://ridingthebeast.com). The problem with theories like this is that they play fast and loose with the facts and can be adjusted and manipulated to prove almost anything.
- ✓ **NERO**—This madman slaughtered thousands of Christians during his notoriously and obnoxiously anti-Christian reign in ancient Rome. And like Judas above, his name Nero Caesar adds up to 666 in mystical numerology. However, the gematria only works if you translate the Latin or Greek into Hebrew and use an irregular spelling of the name. Nero died in AD 68, but even then some people (like the poet Commodian in the third century) expected him to be “raised up from hell” to fulfill his destiny as the Antichrist.
- ✓ **ADOLF HITLER**—Hitler was a political genius, a dangerous demagogue, a vicious and depraved anti-Semite, and a mass murderer with no conscience, so he was a logical addition to the list.
- ✓ **FDR**—President Franklin Delano Roosevelt butted heads with evangelical/fundamentalist leaders in the 1930s because of his socialist policies (including the controversial Social Security program he instituted, along with other welfare strategies like feeding the unemployed hungry in public soup lines) and his aggressive New Deal spending in the midst of the Depression. Some preachers said he was ushering in Armageddon by bankrupting the USA and by rubbing shoulders with the likes of Stalin, the ruthless Soviet dictator. See “Was FDR the Antichrist?” by Matthew Henry Sutton in the March 2012 *Journal of American History* ([jah.oxfordjournals.org](http://jah.oxfordjournals.org)).
- ✓ **JFK**—Promoters of this theory used to claim that John Fitzgerald Kennedy received exactly 666 votes in the 1956 Democratic vice presidential balloting—but that’s incorrect (the most votes he received was 618 on the second ballot). Others pointed to his assassination in 1963 as a fulfillment of the predicted mortal head wound in Revelation 13:3. The biblical Beast, however, is said to recover miraculously. President Kennedy never did.
- ✓ **HENRY KISSINGER**—Nixon’s Jewish secretary of state was a prime suspect for a time due to his intense focus on efforts toward Mideast peace in the 1970s and also because someone devised a simple way to manipulate his last name to yield the sum 666. He’s still alive and kicking; but at age 92, Dr. Kissinger probably doesn’t have the energy to pursue a second career as the Antichrist.
- ✓ **RONALD WILSON REAGAN**—His full name consisted of three sets of six letters each (6-6-6) and he enjoyed enormous popularity during much of his tenure (Reagan won 49 states in the 1984 general election). Also, when he left the White House, he and Nancy moved to an address at 666 St. Cloud Road in Bel Air, CA (which they promptly changed to 668 St. Cloud Road).
- ✓ **KING JUAN CARLOS OF SPAIN**—Various forms of the King’s name can (under some numerological schemes) yield the total 666. Also, Spain was supposedly the 11<sup>th</sup> nation to join the European Union (not exactly correct since Portugal actually joined at the same time in 1986), which was seen by some as a fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy (7:23-25). Furthermore, the King is rumored to own a yacht that sails under the name “Dragon,” and Spain’s famed American-style football team (now defunct) was the Barcelona Dragons—all of which some people see as a link to Revelation 12:9, where John uses the metaphor “dragon” to signify the devil. Otherwise, the Spanish monarch possesses scant qualifications for the Antichrist role and seems content with his relatively quiet life these days.
- ✓ **MIKHAIL GORBACHEV**—Many prophetic “experts” pointed to the last Soviet president’s widespread popularity while he presided over the dismantling of the Soviet empire in the late 1980s and early 90s as evidence that he would emerge as the head of a New World Order with its epicenter in Euro-Asia. They also pointed to the birthmark on his forehead as being somehow connected to the “mark of the beast” (Rev. 14:9). In the 2000s, Gorbachev and some comrades in the business sector have tried three times to establish a new political party in Russia, but so far without success. The Antichrist could do better than this.
- ✓ **PRINCE CHARLES**—Like Gorbachev, the Prince of Wales in the UK has been reputed to be a promoter of the New World Order. Also, some people claim that the phrase “Prince Charles of Wales” adds up to 666 in mystic numerology. And if you write the name “Charles” phonetically, in Greek, on a piece of paper and insert the page in alphabetical order into a Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, it evidently falls right before page 667, which makes it (you guessed it) page 666. Or at least, that’s what they say (we haven’t actually tried it). And then there’s that word “prince,” which reminds some of our “Rapture frenzy” friends that the Antichrist is referred to as the “prince who is to come” in Daniel 9:26.
- ✓ **GEORGE W. BUSH**—Extremist groups accused our 34<sup>th</sup> president of selling the USA out to the New World Order, allowing foreign powers to set up secret military bases on American soil, planning to round up Christians in FEMA concentration camps, and helping set the stage for the coming Tribulation Period.
- ✓ **AL GORE**—His name reportedly adds up to 666 in ASCII code. Using the same system, however, the term “Holy Bible” also adds up to 666. Go figure.
- ✓ **THE POPE**—Since he’s a religious figure (rather than a political leader), the pope would be a better candidate for False Prophet than he is for Antichrist. It’s true that the Vatican (or the Holy See) is a political entity, but it’s a minor player at best on the world stage. However, if the Vatican is ever admitted to the G-9 or the EU, we could revisit this question. As it stands right now, though, the False Prophet could just as easily be an apostate-ecumenical Protestant, Hindu, Jewish, or Muslim leader. One way he’ll help the Beast solidify his control over the masses is by claiming to perform miracles (Rev. 16:14).
- ✓ **PRESIDENT OBAMA**—The current administration’s radical social agenda has resulted in a strained relationship with evangelicals and political conservatives. The president has become the object of widespread speculation about his motives and a possible underlying agenda. Just Google “Obama 666” and you’ll find dozens of extremist websites (most of them anonymous) hawking crazy and far-fetched theories that identify Obama as the Antichrist. One scenario says that he will declare martial law next year so he doesn’t have to leave office at the end of his second term.

We shouldn’t allow all of this *meshugaas* (Yiddish for silliness) to leave us jaded to the point where we overlook the reality of a coming Antichrist. In fact, this long parade of earlier imposters might explain how the real Antichrist, when he finally arrives on the scene, will be able to slip in under the radar.

# Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



## In Spirit and in Truth

**Peter Parkas, CJFM Northeast Representative (New Jersey)**, had an unusual encounter with “John” at a Messianic congregation in New Jersey. He had met John at an event two weeks before and greeted him following the service. A discussion ensued, and in the course of their conversation, Peter saw some red flags. He had assumed that John was a Jewish believer, and John had even told him that he had been baptized in a church he had attended for a while. However, as they continued talking, it was evident to Peter that “John had no idea of sin, salvation, judgment or atonement—and no clue about the Holy Spirit.” Peter’s heart was moved and he proceeded to explain the Gospel message in detail. At its conclusion, John prayed to receive Yeshua as his Lord and Savior. Peter meets with John regularly, discipling him in the Word of God. Peter is blessed that John is, at last, a true born-again believer, worshiping in Spirit and Truth. John lives with his parents and invited Peter and his wife, Diann, to their Hanukkah party. Pray that they would have opportunities to witness to John’s parents and also to John’s brother, who follows Orthodox Judaism.

## Self-Deception

Peter Parkas became engaged in another unusual, but providential, conversation. He met “H” who claimed to be a Christian, but denied that she was a sinner who needed grace for salvation. She told Peter that she loves God with all her heart, and hence, will go to Heaven. When Peter responded that she was deceived to think that her heart was completely pure, “she got very angry and said that I was a wicked man.” He then shared what the Word says, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*” (1 John 1:8). Based on his experiences in the mission field, Peter observes that when we share the Gospel, individuals get angry and become extremely offended. However, he says, “Let the cross of Yeshua be the offense because Jesus claims to be the *only* way to the Father (see John 14:6). Please pray for H’s receptivity.”

## Immersion

**Michelle Beadle, CJFM Southeast Representative (New Orleans)**, recently had the privilege of “immersing” a Jewish woman from New Orleans who had trusted and received Yeshua (Jesus) as her Messiah. According to Jewish tradition and Scripture, baptism is a Jewish ritual, known by its Hebrew name,

*T’vilah* (correctly translated as immersion in English), and is thus called by Jewish believers. The woman’s family and friends witnessed her immersion and afterward enjoyed a “festive” meal together. Please join Michelle in praying for the salvation of the other members of this Jewish family.

## Regardless!

**Michael Campo, CJFM Area Director (Chicago)**, recently witnessed to a young Jewish woman who is like a daughter to him. He writes, “What father would not want his child to come to faith?” She had been asked to watch Mike’s grandson during a Passover Seder at her mother’s house and was showing him photos of the event (Mike’s grandson had been selected to ask the questions during that portion of the Seder). Mike took the opportunity to tell her about the connection between the story of the Passover and the Gospel message of the Lamb who would take away her sins, and explained why he believed it. However, Mike writes further, “Like so many others who hear, she did not believe at that very moment. Most of the witnessing opportunities I share end in faith—praise God, but so many also end with ‘not now’ or ‘maybe later,’ and sometimes fall on hardened hearts. I am reminded of what the Apostle Paul wrote: *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?* (2 Cor. 2:14-16). God is worshiped every time we proclaim the knowledge of the Gospel—regardless!”

## Faith and Atheism

**Eric Chabot, CJFM representative (Columbus, OH)**, recently led an outreach at a large, local prison. His presentation was entitled, “I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist,” and there were even a couple Jewish people in attendance. Eric was asked to answer questions from the atheists in the audience. He writes, “Please pray that God spoke through me and that my efforts will bear fruit.”

“*And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for life eternal, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together*” (John 4:36). 

# Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

## Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at [garyh@cjfm.org](mailto:garyh@cjfm.org), or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

You may see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.

**QUESTION:** *Atheists and agnostics point to Mark 2:26 as an example of Jesus (and the Bible) being in error because the high priest during the period in question was Ahimelech rather than Abiathar. Is there a solution to this problem?*

**ANSWER:** Good question! There are several NT passages where skeptics point to alleged discrepancies in the text, so we should take these challenges seriously and be prepared to respond when we're asked about them (1 Peter 3:15). Regarding this particular passage in Mark 2, I'll let Andrew Wilson of Kings Church in Eastbourne, England, address the pertinent issues. Here are his insightful observations:

All of us are tempted on occasion to approach biblical tensions—texts that seem to contradict each other—in flippant or offhand ways. At one end of the spectrum are skeptics who reduce tensions to textual incoherence and human invention. On the other are those with more evangelical commitments, who desperately trawl books and websites to harmonize mismatching texts. Once they find one, they sigh and move on as if the tension has nothing to teach us. The “problem” has been “resolved.”

But if we want to take Scripture seriously, we must ask why tensions exist in the first place. Why did the Holy Spirit—who inspired Scripture—cause these discrepant texts to be written? What do they reveal? And what might we lose if we “resolve” the problem? We are, after all, listening for the voice of God, not solving a puzzle.

Some examples are more obvious than others. The paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility is not meant to be resolved but rather retained. Scripture indicates that both God and we work in our salvation. Is God three or one? Yes. Should we or should we not answer a fool according to his folly? Yes (Prov. 26:4–5). We recognize these tensions, yet accept them as foundational to Christian faith.

Yet when it comes to historical discrepancies in the biblical text, we enter problem-solving mode. When we find that Jesus has two different genealogies, or that the wedding feast parable has two different endings, we forget that we are listening to a divinely orchestrated symphony. Instead of discerning the different parts of the various musicians, we try to force them to play the same note.

One of my favorite discrepancies is Jesus' “mistake” in Mark 2. In this passage, the Pharisees criticize Jesus for letting His disciples pluck grain on the Sabbath. In response, Jesus explains that He and His friends are doing what David and his men did when they ate the holy bread in the time

of Abiathar the high priest (Mark 2:25–26). The problem is, 1 Samuel 21 tells us that Ahimelech, not his son Abiathar, was the high priest at the time that David and his men ate the holy bread. Either Jesus made a mistake or Mark did. In either case, evangelicals get nervous.

Scholar Bart Ehrman said that when he discovered this discrepancy in seminary, it kick-started his departure from Christianity. Progressive UK pastor Steve Chalke made it his opening salvo in a debate with me about the truthfulness of the Bible. Countless Christians, on the other hand, upon seeing the problem, have rushed to their study Bibles or other resources where they discover, in relief, that the Greek phrase *epi Abiathar* could mean “in the passage about Abiathar” rather than “in the time of Abiathar.” “That must be it,” they exclaim. “Problem solved. On to Mark 3.”

Yet there is far more going on in Mark 2. Jesus' argument is not that He has found an obscure guy in the Old Testament who once ate bread on a Saturday. His point is that David, Israel's true king-in-waiting, and his consecrated friends were allowed the holy bread that day. Jesus is interpreting His actions through the story of Israel's greatest king. He is saying, in that cryptic way He often does, “I am David. These guys are My men. So they can eat what they want.”

So Jesus is David, the true king of Israel, and the disciples are His allies. But they aren't the only characters in the story. Herod is Saul, the current king who has drifted from God and now wants to kill the pretender to the throne. John the Baptist is Samuel, the fiery prophet who prepares the way for the new king and confronts the old one. Judas is Doeg the Edomite, the betrayer. And Abiathar? He is Eli's great-great-grandson, the last surviving member of the old priestly line, whose eventual removal from the priesthood would prove true God's word through Samuel (1 Kings 2:27).

All of this means that Jesus mentions Abiathar rather than Ahimelech for good reason. He is saying, “I am David, these are My men, and the current priests are Abiathar. They are in charge now, but in just a few years their priesthood will end, just like Abiathar's. And My kingdom will be established, just like David's.”

I think that's wonderful. The Holy Spirit didn't put discrepancies in Scripture to provide fuel for skeptics, employment for commentators, or annoyance for evangelical Christians. He did it to make us think, search, meditate, read, learn—and be ever filled with awe.

—From “Did Jesus Get the Bible Wrong?” by Andrew Wilson (Christianity Today [September 2015], Vol. 59, No. 7, Page 28). Used by permission.

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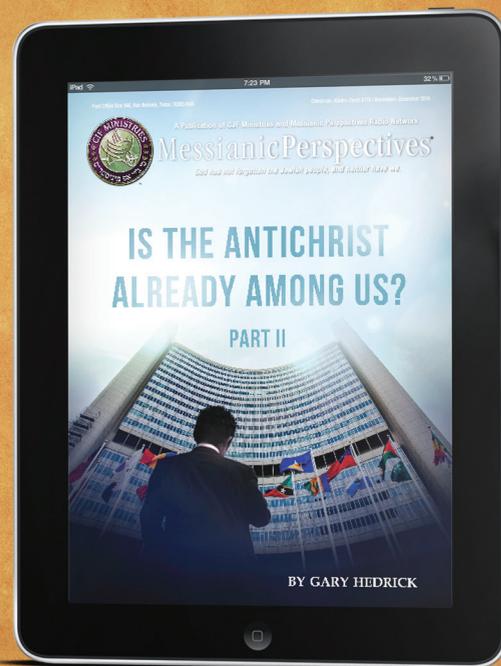
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