



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 I



**BY GARY HEDRICK**

I'm probably one of the few preachers in the world to have ever had contact with the Antichrist. He called our office about ten years ago and since it was after hours, he left me a voice mail. He said he had heard me talking about him on the radio and he wasn't happy with what I had said.

Did this really happen? Yes, it did (just ask Cindy, my executive assistant!). Was this person actually the Antichrist? Obviously not. He was either someone with a few screws loose or maybe just a prankster. We didn't have caller ID in those days, and he didn't leave his number, so I couldn't return the call. But I got an ear full!

Like I tell our people here, there's never a dull moment in Jewish ministry! And there's something about prophecy, especially, that stirs up peoples' interest. After all, isn't the future something we all wonder about? When will Yeshua come back to Planet Earth? Every redeemed heart cries out for Messiah's return and the ensuing "times of restoration of all things," when God will set everything right that's gone wrong in this crazy, sin-sick world (Acts 3:21).

If we are living at the tail end of the "last days," like many of us suspect, then it's true that many of the key players in the end-time drama—including the Antichrist—could indeed be alive today, even as you're reading these words.<sup>1</sup>

But it's also true that some folks want the inside scoop on the timing of the Lord's return for the wrong reasons. Several years ago, for instance, I was speaking in a prophecy conference when a man approached me wanting to know how soon the Lord would be coming back. I replied, "The sooner, the better!"—or something to that effect. But this man was very serious—in fact, he was noticeably nervous and agitated. Later, we found a private place to talk and he confided that he hadn't paid his taxes in years and the IRS was closing in on him. He said his poor wife was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. To him, the Rapture was a much-needed escape hatch! He wanted assurances that he

would be snatched up to Heaven before government agents kicked in his door.

Prophetic inquiry may not always be an exact science, but one thing is absolutely and invariably true: *The Lord's return should never be seen as a means of escaping the consequences of our own folly and foolishness.* As followers of Messiah Yeshua, we are lights in a dark world (Matt. 5:14). The quality of our lives is supposed to help show people the way to God!<sup>2</sup> So we pay our bills (including taxes), fulfill our commitments and responsibilities, tell the truth, and always do the right thing to maintain an honorable reputation in the world.

The Apostle Peter lived during the murderous reign of the brutal, anti-Christian Emperor Nero.<sup>3</sup> Nero was an evil, wicked man, so if Peter had rebelled against his authority, who could have blamed him? But he didn't! In fact, here's what he said:

*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,*

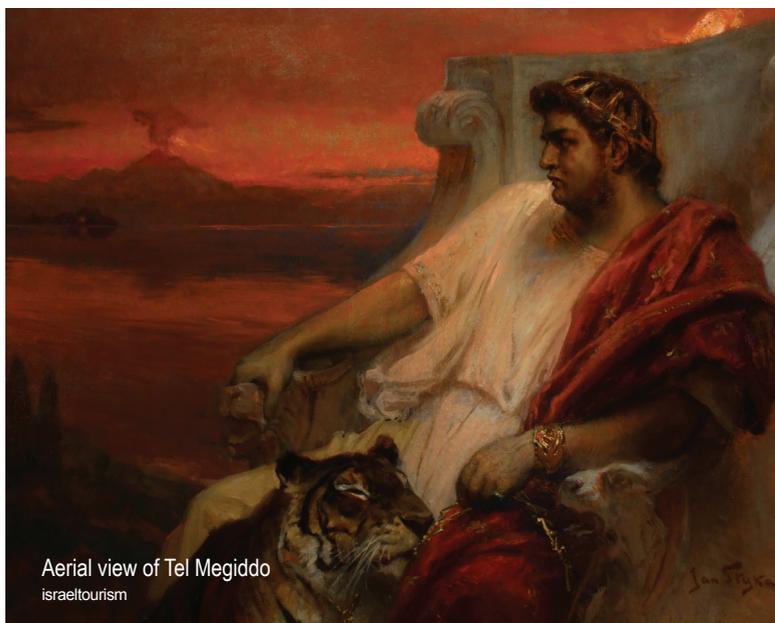
*Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

*Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme,*

*Or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.*

*For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Peter 2:11-15).*

So conversations about how close we might be to the Lord's return are only for those of us who are interested for the right reasons and aren't preoccupied with dubious and misguided pursuits like date setting.<sup>4</sup>



## Messianic Perspectives®

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## Prophetic Quackery

In the 1960s and 70s, there was a resurgence of interest in futurist prophecy. It was during this time that a young graduate of Dallas Seminary, Hal Lindsey, co-wrote (with Carole Carlson) his best-selling book *The Late, Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970). Large prophecy conferences were being conducted all over North America. Speakers included luminaries like J. Vernon McGee, Lehman Strauss, Douglas B. MacCorkle, Bruce Dunn, Ralph Gade, Dave Breese, and our own Charles Halff, among many others.

In these conferences, the topic of prophecy was treated sensibly and responsibly. In fact, some of the prophetic speakers in those days were critical of Lindsey's book because they felt he came too close to setting a date for the Rapture with his definition of the Greek term for "generation" in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:34, Luke 21:32).<sup>5</sup> They shunned gratuitous, self-serving sensationalism. More recently, however, self-proclaimed "experts" have created a cottage industry around their ridiculous, prophetic theories setting dates for the Rapture. These guys would have been run out of town on a rail if they had tried to foist this nonsense on those old-timers.

In the lead-up to their calculated dates, these "I-Know-When-the-Rapture-Will-Happen" types whip sincere but gullible believers into a frenzy of anticipation. When their predictions don't materialize, they're unfazed and simply move on to yet another half-baked theory. Like lemmings, their disciples follow in lockstep. They evidently lack the cognitive capacity—not to mention the spiritual discernment—to figure out that something isn't quite right!

One of the unintended consequences of this "Rapture frenzy" movement—where they migrate from one Rapture date to another, sometimes within weeks of each other—has been to bring disrepute on the legitimate study of future prophecy. Prophecy conferences (at least

the legitimate ones) are now mostly a thing of the past because many people, believers and unbelievers alike, are persuaded by this silliness that the study of prophecy—and the topic of the Rapture in particular—is for religious kooks and quacks. This is awkward for those of us who believe in the Rapture but reject the date-setting component that sometimes comes with it.

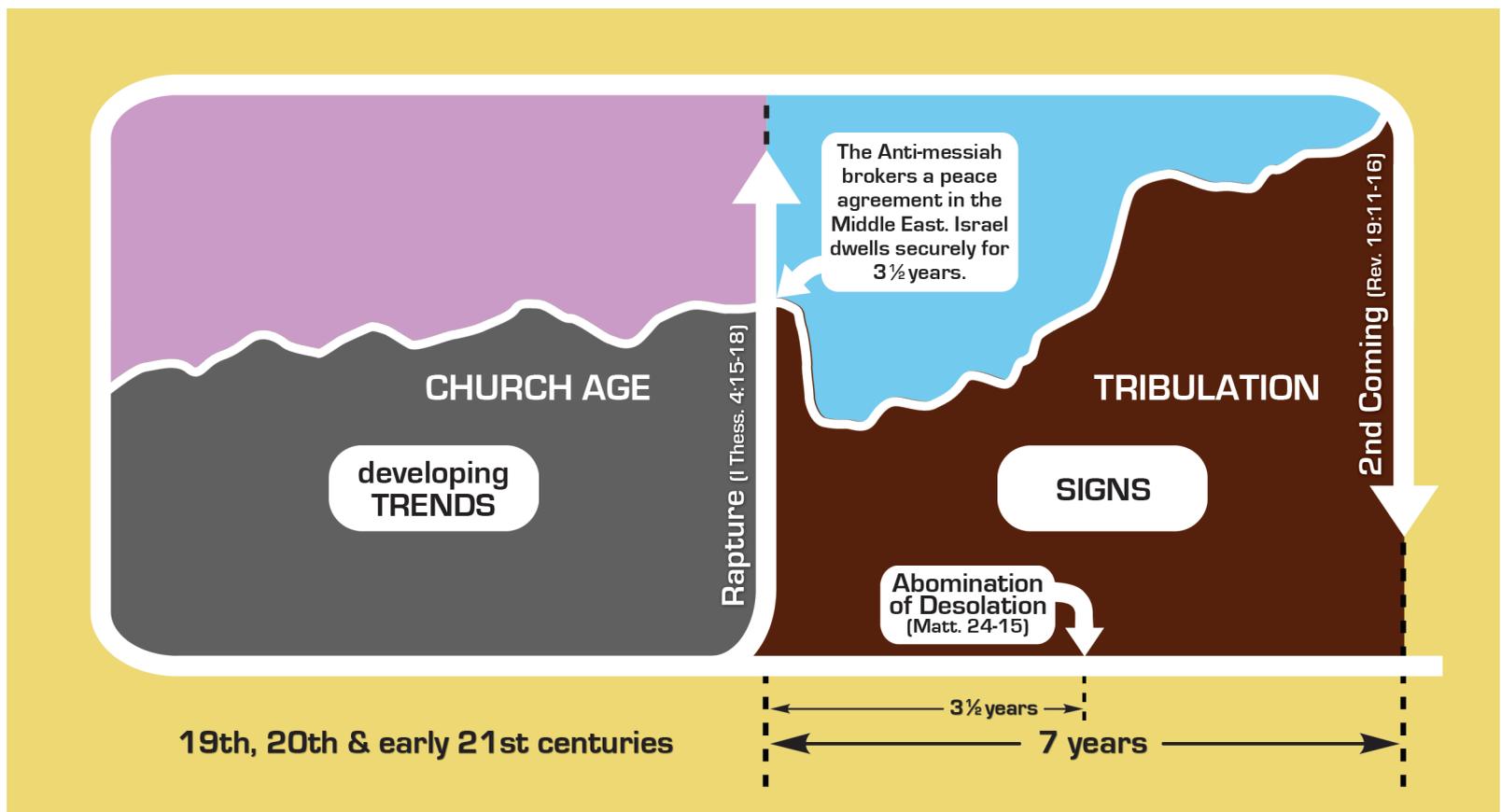
It's awkward when we find ourselves in situations where we have to acknowledge that our critics aren't entirely wrong. They have a valid gripe when they denounce the loonies among us. Churches and organizations associated with the up-and-coming New Calvinist Movement (which is largely populated by Reformed amillennialists) have been openly critical of our views.<sup>6</sup> Their most visible mouthpiece in North America is the Gospel Coalition,<sup>7</sup> an organization that's been outspoken in its criticisms of evangelicals who subscribe to a two-stage Second Coming (i.e., the Rapture followed seven years later by the Messiah's coming in glory).<sup>8</sup>

The Gospel Coalition counts some of the world's leading theologians among its membership, so we're not going to escape their scrutiny if our premillennial house isn't in order.

One well-known evangelical radio personality recently wrote:

I'm talking about the endless parade of Christian leaders—from Tim LaHaye to Perry Stone and from Jack Van Impe to John Hagee—whose tragically flawed interpretations of biblical prophecy lead multitudes of people into a sort of hermeneutical hysteria.

Truth is, biblical prophecy is not intended to tell us when Christ will return—but that He will return. And, when He does, He will "put all things to right." Nor is biblical prophecy designed to pin the tail on Antichrist or pinpoint a future tribulation.<sup>9</sup>



Again, this is awkward, at least from our point of view, because much of what this gentleman says in the above excerpt is true. Some of our people have indeed gone to great lengths to figure out who the Antichrist will be. Others have tried to calculate dates for the Rapture and/or the Second Coming. So here we have a quote from a high profile evangelical leader who is unabashedly anti-Israel in his views, and should be held accountable for his horrible past statements about the Jewish State; but we're sidetracked because many of our fellow premillennialists (with their date setting and sensationalism) are providing him with fodder for his attacks on us.

Atheists and agnostics, too, routinely cite the prophetic "lunacy" of some of our pre-Trib fringe groups. To them, it goes to show that people who believe in God are dim-witted, uninformed, and hopelessly naïve. Some of these critics claim to be former Christians who renounced their faith as a result of their experiences. Just Google the search term "recovering fundamentalist" and you'll find scores of people complaining about the years they spent in "fundamentalist" families or churches. Apocalyptic hysteria and date setting both figure prominently in their caricatures of a dysfunctional (and I might add, unbiblical) "fundamentalism."<sup>10</sup>

One former fundamentalist (now an agnostic) has this to say about the Antichrist:

While Christian end-time novels may be amusing fantasy to most of us, almost cartoonish and comedic for their absurdity, fundamentalists take their scenarios quite seriously. The Antichrists [portrayed in their writings] may be fictional, but there are people who fully expect someone pretty much like them to arise soon on the world stage.<sup>11</sup>

He's right when he says we "fully expect" the ancient prophecies to be fulfilled—and perhaps soon. But again, we sometimes shoot ourselves in the foot with our shallowness and immaturity. We take the Bible's profound and amazing prophetic teachings and turn them into something cheesy and silly like you might find in a cheap, supermarket tabloid. No wonder some people think that anyone who's a serious student of prophecy is a bit of an oddball!

We have a Christian friend here in south-central Texas who's been caught up in the "Rapture frenzy" movement

for years.<sup>12</sup> She's a bit naïve, and certainly gullible—and she's definitely not a theologian. But she's also very sweet, so her friends take her frequent, end-of-the-world warnings with a grain of salt. Not long ago, she reported that someone named Don has declared that the Rapture will happen next month—and a woman in Africa had a series of visions recently confirming Don's date (which she thinks means it must be true). Last summer, this local friend was all worked up about the so-called "blood moons" phenomenon and she was telling everyone that the Rapture would take place in September of 2015. Before that, it was supposed to happen in March or April. She thinks this is what it means to be "watchful." She's been doing this for years—and she sends her emails out to hundreds of people!

## Prophetic Watchfulness

There's an interesting bit of irony in all of this. The date setters claim they're obeying the Lord's command that we should "watch" for His return—but they're actually doing just the opposite.

You see, Yeshua the Messiah mentions "watch" and "watching" in a prophetic context 11 times in the New Testament (NT). In those passages, He clearly states that believers living at the time of His return won't know beforehand when it's going to happen. Since no one can know the specific day or hour, then, *we should maintain a posture of readiness at all times*. That's why the date-setting approach is all wrong—and why it's steeped in such irony. Date setting contradicts what the Lord has told us about being constantly watchful:

*"Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—*

*Lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.*

*And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"* (Mark 13:35-37).

Note that the Lord's main premise is that we will "not know when" He is going to return. True watchfulness, then, is fundamentally incompatible with prophetic theories and calculations purporting to tell us when He's coming back. That's why we must remain vigilant and watchful at all times.



## What About Signs of the Times?

The phrase “signs of the times” appears only once in the NT:

*He answered and said to [the Pharisees and Sadducees], “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’;*

*“And in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:2-3).*

In this passage, the Lord is addressing unbelievers—specifically, the religious leaders from Jerusalem (Pharisees and Sadducees). He’s referring to the many passages in the Jewish Bible that provided details about the Messiah’s first coming—including His birth in Bethlehem of Judea.<sup>13</sup>

But there’s more. The Prophet Isaiah had foretold that when the Messiah appeared, they would know Him because He would heal the blind (35:5a; 42:7), the deaf (35:5b), the lame (35:6a), and the dumb (35:6b).<sup>14</sup> Yeshua was known to have fulfilled all of those requirements—and more. In spite of that preponderance of signs and indicators, however, the religious community in Israel failed to recognize Him as the Messiah.<sup>15</sup>

The question, then, is this: Are there signs for the Second Coming like there were for His first coming? Are there prophetic indicators that should tell that final generation of believers (if we’re being watchful, like He said) when His return is near?

The answer is yes; the Bible enumerates many Messianic signs that will precede the Second Coming. In fact, the Lord himself gave an extended discourse on this very topic in Matthew 24. In this famous sermon, He described in great detail conditions in the world prior to His return (vv. 4-35).

However, these signs are associated with the Day of the LORD, which we believe begins with the Tribulation—*after* the Rapture.<sup>16</sup>

If this is the case, it means there are no signs, per se, prior to the Rapture. Nothing will happen in advance to warn us that He’s coming to snatch us away. Events like “wars and rumors of wars,” “famine,” “pestilence,” and the others listed, describe conditions on earth during the Tribulation Period after the Church has been removed.<sup>17</sup> They are *not* associated with the Rapture.



## Signs vs. Trends

In the Bible, signs are mostly for unbelievers rather than for believers (John 4:48).<sup>18</sup> A believer, by definition, doesn’t require a sign; he believes even if there’s a scarcity of tangible evidence. In his teaching about the gift of “tongues” (that is, the supernatural enablement to communicate in languages we’ve never learned), the Apostle Paul said, *Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe* (1 Cor. 14:22).

But faith and evidence don’t have to be in conflict. Much of the Christian faith is based on solid historical, empirical proofs.<sup>19</sup> God provided signs in advance of His Son’s first coming 2,000 years ago. We’ve already noted that dozens of Messianic prophecies in the Jewish Bible revealed (far in advance) many details about His birth, life, death, and Resurrection.

In Yeshua’s extended prophetic discourse in Matthew 24, He accurately predicted events that would take place both in AD 70 (when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem) and also later, during the ramp-up to His Second Coming. But since we’ve already said that those “signs” apply only to His coming in glory (at the close of the Tribulation), must we then conclude that there won’t be any advance notice whatsoever for the Rapture seven years earlier?

Not necessarily. Think of it like this. Let’s say my mechanic tells me, “Gary, when you see black smoke pouring out the tailpipe of your car, that tells you the engine is broken and you’d better find a place to pull over!” Does that mean I can’t know the car is in trouble until I actually see smoke? Of course not. A “check engine” warning might light up on the instrument cluster, for example. Strange noises may come from under the hood. Or the car could start decelerating or behaving erratically. In any case, it’s highly unlikely that a trail of thick, black smoke behind my car would be the first and only warning sign.

Likewise, many of the Tribulation signs could manifest themselves in various ways before the Tribulation begins. Since a prophetic “sign,” technically, applies only to conditions during the Tribulation Period (and specifically, during its final three and a half years), we probably should avoid referring to something that happens before the Tribulation as a “sign.” A prophetically significant indicator prior to the Rapture would be more like a developing “trend” than a full-blown sign.

For instance, the Lord said that one of the Tribulation signs will be “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6). It’s not hard to imagine pre-Trib developments that could morph later (during the Tribulation) into full-scale wars and pre-wars.<sup>20</sup> We’re talking about events like regional conflicts, military maneuvers and boundary disputes, global tensions and unrest, economic instability, and cyber (online) attacks. All of these things could portend the approach of the Tribulation wars. In fact, conditions in Israel during the first half of the Tribulation are said to be conducive to “peace and safety” (1 Thess. 5:3), which would only be noteworthy if conditions before the Rapture (and also after those first three and a half years of the Tribulation) were *not* favorable to Israel’s security interests.

Going back to that car analogy, the clattering sounds emanating from the engine compartment or the glowing “check engine” light are the evolving *trends* that help us anticipate the problem even before smoke (the *sign*) begins pouring out of the exhaust.

The signs of the Second Coming are even more specific, because no single event by itself signifies the Lord's return. An event is only a sign when it happens in conjunction with "all" of the other signs (Matt. 24:33). The biblical signs occur simultaneously and with increasing frequency and intensity, like birth pains.<sup>21</sup>

If what we've said so far is true, it means there are no signs, per se, for the Rapture—but there *are* signs for the Second Coming. This begs the question: Why would the Bible provide signs for the future Tribulation believers but not for us today? To me, the most likely answer is that it's because the genesis of the end-time Tribulation is variable (that is, it could begin anytime) while its terminus—the Messiah's glorious appearing at the close of the Tribulation—occurs on a fixed schedule.<sup>22</sup>

Making it possible (with signs) to assign a specific date to the Rapture would do away with its "anytime" aspect. That's why there are no prophetic signs prior to the Tribulation Period. However, certain pre-signs (or trends) will almost

certainly be recognizable prior to the Rapture. Then, after we're gone, many people—both Jews and Gentiles—will come to faith during the Tribulation; and those Tribulation saints will have the data they need to figure out when the Lord will return to earth to establish His Kingdom. 

TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE. In what way(s) will the Antichrist be a counterfeit of the true Messiah? How will his personality differ from the way he's portrayed in pop culture films? Will he be Jewish? And of course, could he be living among us today? These are some of the questions Gary will address in Part 2.



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<sup>1</sup>The biblical "last days" (*acharit hayamim* in Hebrew; *eschatai hemerais* in Greek) technically began with the first coming of the Messiah 2,000 years ago and will conclude with the Second Coming. Passages like Hebrews 1:2 refer to the "last days" in the present tense, so the author believed he was living in those prophetically significant times. Other passages like 2 Timothy 3:1 and 2 Peter 3:3, however, refer to the "last days" in the future tense. So *acharit hayamim* ("last days") is a Hebrew phrase describing the transition from *olam hazeh* ("the present age") to the *olam habah* ("world to come"), spanning both the Church Age and also the Tribulation. It was God's plan all along that every generation should have the "blessed hope" that the Lord might return in their lifetime. Paul's reference to "we who are alive and remain" in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 17 demonstrates His own expectancy that the Lord could come during his lifetime. Near the end of the Apostolic Age, some people must have already been complaining about the delay in the Lord's return, because Peter addressed the issue by saying that rather than complaining, we should view the extra time as an evangelistic opportunity to reach out to a lost world with the Good News of Yeshua: *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9). This is good advice for us today.

<sup>2</sup>Someone has rightly observed, "Your life may be the only 'Bible' some people will ever read."

<sup>3</sup>Nero reigned as Emperor of Rome from AD 54 to 68 and persecuted the Early Church relentlessly. According to the historian Tacitus, Nero was rumored to have had Christian prisoners dipped in oil and set on fire at night to light his gardens. He executed his own mother to further his political agenda. Peter himself was martyred near the end of Nero's reign, making it all the more remarkable that he admonishes believers to submit to governmental authority "for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13). Peter submitted to Nero even unto death.

<sup>4</sup>One of "the right reasons" for being watchful is that it helps us keep our lives and priorities in order: *Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works* (Titus 2:13-14). Whenever the Lord returns, we won't be caught off guard as long as we maintain a posture of vigilance and watchfulness: *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief* (1 Thess. 5:4, cf. Luke 12:35-44). A common thread in all of the "watchful" passages is an emphasis on faithful, consistent service and holy living. Any prophetic approach that ignores this emphasis on holiness and becomes an end unto itself is out of balance. If we remain ready at all times, as He told us to be, date setting is irrelevant.

<sup>5</sup>See page 54 of the original 192-page Zondervan edition.

<sup>6</sup>The New Calvinist Movement (dating from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century) shouldn't be confused with the historic neo-Calvinist movement, which arose more than a century earlier in the Netherlands and was associated with the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920).

<sup>7</sup>For more information on The Gospel Coalition, see my two-part article about John Piper's prophetic pronouncements in the July-August and September-October 2014 issues of *Messianic Perspectives* (available online in the archives at [www.cjfm.org](http://www.cjfm.org)).

<sup>8</sup>See "Will Christians Be Secretly Raptured?" (October 29, 2014) by Jeramie Rinne on The Gospel Coalition website ([www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org)).

<sup>9</sup>From "Prophetic S-T-A-R-S in the Constellation of Biblical Prophecy" by Hank Hanegraaff of the Creation Research Institute in Charlotte, NC, in his e-newsletter ([www.equip.org](http://www.equip.org)). For our critique of Hank's book *The Apocalypse Code*, in which he presents his modified preterist approach to prophecy, see "My Vendetta with Tim LaHaye" in the September-October 2007 issue of *Messianic Perspectives* (archives available at [www.cjfm.org](http://www.cjfm.org)).

<sup>10</sup>See [www.recoveringfundamentalists.com](http://www.recoveringfundamentalists.com) and "End Times Lunacy—An Asteroid Will NOT Hit Earth on September 24, 2015" at [www.in5d.com](http://www.in5d.com) (June 12, 2015).

<sup>11</sup>Larry Jimenez in "10 Sinister Fictional Tales of the Antichrist" ([www.listverse.com](http://www.listverse.com), 1/5/2015).

<sup>12</sup>"Rapture frenzy" is a term we coined to designate people and groups that take biblical watchfulness to ridiculous extremes (like when they set dates for the Rapture and move to the mountains to wait for it).

<sup>13</sup>The ancient Jewish prophets foretold many details about the Messiah's birth and early life, including these: (1) He would be born to a virgin (Isa. 7:14); (2) He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:1-2); (3) He would come from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10); (4) He would be a direct descendant of not only Abraham (Gen. 22:18), but also of King David (Jer. 23:5); and (5) He would be called out of Egypt in his youth (Hosea 11:1). For a comprehensive survey of Messianic predictions in the Bible, including those about Messiah's birth, see *The Messiah in the Old Testament* by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

<sup>14</sup>This information is adapted from the Messiah Revealed website ("The Messiah Would Perform Miracles") at [www.messiahrevealed.org](http://www.messiahrevealed.org).

<sup>15</sup>*He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him* (John 1:11).

<sup>16</sup>See "The Day of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)" by John Walvoord (2008) at [www.walvoord.com](http://www.walvoord.com), where he explains that this is not a literal, 24-hour day, but rather an extended period of time (slightly more than 1,000 years, in fact, if we include the Millennium) when God intervenes in history to judge humanity's rebellion and usher in His own rule. As Paul Benware points out in his book *Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006), there are both narrow and broad applications of the phrase "Day of the LORD" in Scripture. The broader application includes the Millennium. Norman Geisler agrees that the phrase "Day of the LORD" can refer both to the Tribulation and also to events during the Millennium (*Systematic Theology, Volume Four: Church, Last Things* [Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2005], 622-23). Messianic scholar Arnold Fruchtenbaum, on the other hand, favors the more narrow view, saying that the phrase "Day of the LORD" denotes only the seven-year Tribulation Period, exclusive of the Millennium.

<sup>17</sup>More specifically, the prophetic "signs" of the Second Coming will become discernible during the second three and a half years of the Tribulation Period. For a comparison of the pre- and post-Tribulation views of the Rapture, see Geisler, *Ibid.*, Chapter 14 ("The Tribulation and the Rapture"), 597-661.

<sup>18</sup>The Lord said, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Matt. 16:4a). So it's true that as a general rule, signs are for unbelievers. Sometimes the Lord provides signs for His people, however. For instance, Matthew (1:22-23) links Yeshua's virgin birth to the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, where it's called a "sign." And in Matthew 24, where the Messiah catalogues a whole list of signs at the end of this age, He's warning Jewish believers who will be living during the Tribulation so they can be forewarned about the perils that lie ahead.

<sup>19</sup>John based much of his testimony on empirical evidence: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life* (1 John 1:1).

<sup>20</sup>We use the term "pre-war" to describe circumstances that could evolve into a full-scale war. "Rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6) would be an equivalent expression.

<sup>21</sup>The English word "sorrows" in Matthew 24:8 translates the Greek *odin*, meaning "birth pains." Leading up to the birth of her baby, a mother's contractions become steadily stronger and closer together. The Lord says the prophetic signs for His second coming will unfold in much the same way. That is, the signs will increase in frequency and intensity until the Kingdom is finally "born."

<sup>22</sup>Daniel and Revelation both provide chronological information about the sequence of events during the Tribulation—even counting the number of days or months in certain contexts (e.g., Dan. 12:11-12, Rev. 11:2-3, 5). We believe the Second Coming will occur three and a half years after the Abomination of Desolation (the desecration of the Temple) at the midpoint of the Tribulation.

# 25 Biblical Names/Titles of the Antichrist

by Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)



## 1. THE ANTICHRIST

*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 . . . Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the [Messiah]? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:18, 22).* This name introduces to us one of the most solemn and foreboding subjects in the Word of God. It brings before us one of the persons in the Trinity of Evil. At every point he is the antithesis of Messiah. The word *Antichrist* has a double significance. Its primary meaning is one who is opposed to Messiah, but its secondary meaning is one who is *instead* of Messiah. Let not this be thought strange, for it accords with the two stages in his career. At first he will pose as the true Messiah, masquerading in the costume of religion. Later he will throw off his disguise, stand forth in his true character, and set himself up as one who is against God and His Messiah.

Not only does *anti*-christ denote the antagonist of Messiah, but it tells of one who is instead of the Messiah. The word signifies another Messiah, a pro-Christ, an *alter christus*, a pretender to the name of Messiah. He will seem to be and will set himself up as the true Messiah. He will be the devil's counterfeit. Just as the devil is an *anti-theos*—not only the adversary of God, but the *usurper* of the place and prerogatives of God, demanding worship; so the *Son of Perdition* will be *anti*-Messiah—not only the antagonist and opponent of Messiah, but His rival, assuming the very position and prerogatives of the true Messiah, passing himself off as the rightful claimant to all the rights and honors of the Son of God.

## 2. THE MAN OF SIN, THE SON OF PERDITION

*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 (2 Thess. 2:3).* This double appellation is probably the most awful, the most important, and the most revealing title given to the Antichrist in the entire Bible. It diagnoses his personality and exposes his awful character. It tells us that he will be possessed of a twofold nature: He will be a man, and yet more than a man. He will be Satan's parody of the God-Man. He will be an incarnation of the devil. The world today is talking of and looking for the *super*-man. This is exactly what the Antichrist will be. He will be the Serpent's masterpiece.

*That Man of Sin.* What a frightful name! The sin of man will culminate in the *Man of Sin*. The Messiah of God was sinless; the Messiah of Satan will not only be sinful, but also the *Man of Sin*. *Man of Sin* intimates that he will be the living and active embodiment of every form and character of evil. *Man of Sin* signifies that he will be sin itself personified. *Man of Sin* denotes there will be no lengths of wickedness to which he will not go, no forms of evil to which he will be a stranger, no depths of corruption that he will not reach.

*The Son of Perdition.* Again we are forced to exclaim, what a frightful name! Not only a human degenerate, but the offspring of the Dragon. Not only the worst of human kind, but the incarnation of the devil. Not only the most depraved of all sinners, but an emanation from the pit itself. *Son of Perdition* denotes that he will be the culmination and consummation of satanic craft and power. All the evil, malignity, cunning, and power of the Serpent will be embodied in this terrible monster!

## 3. THE LAWLESS ONE

*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 (2 Thess. 2:8).* *The Lawless One* is another name of the Antichrist, which makes manifest his awful character. Each of his names exhibits him as the antithesis of the true Messiah.

The Lord Yeshua was the Righteous One; the *Man of Sin* will be the *Lawless One*. The Lord Yeshua was "made under the law" (Gal. 4:4); the Antichrist will oppose all law, being a law unto himself. When the Savior entered this world, He came saying, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God" (Heb. 10:9); but of the Antichrist it is written, *Then the king shall do according to his own will* (Dan. 11:36). The Antichrist will set himself up in direct opposition to all authority, both divine and human.

## 4. THE BEAST

*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).* The Beast is another name that reveals the terrible nature and character of the Antichrist and which places him in sharp antithesis to the true Messiah. The Beast is the title by which he is most frequently designated in the Revelation; there are at least thirty references to him under this name in the last book of the Bible. The Greek word signifies a wild beast.

This name, the *Beast*, contrasts the anti-messiah from the true Messiah as "the Lamb"; and it is a significant fact that by far the great majority of passages where the Lord Yeshua is so designated are also found here in the Apocalypse. The "Lamb" is the Savior of sinners; the *Beast* is the persecutor and slayer of the saints. The "Lamb" calls attention to the gentleness of Messiah; the *Beast* tells of the ferocity of the Antichrist. The "Lamb" reveals Messiah as the "harmless" One (Heb. 7:26); the *Beast* manifests the Antichrist as the cruel and heartless one. Under the Law, lambs were ceremonially clean and used in sacrifice, but beasts were unclean and unfit for sacrifices.

It is a point of interest to note that there is one other very striking contrast between the persons in the Holy Trinity and the persons in the Trinity of Evil. At our Lord's baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and the first mention of the Holy Spirit in Scripture represents Him as "brooding" like a dove over the waters that covered the pre-Adamic earth (Gen. 1:2). How remarkable are those symbols—a "Lamb" and a "Dove"! A dove, not a hawk or an eagle. The gentle, harmless, cooing dove. Against this the devil is termed "the Dragon." What a contrast—"the Dove" and "the Lamb", "the Dragon" and "the Beast"!

## 5. THE BLOODTHIRSTY AND DECEITFUL MAN

*You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful Man (Psalm 5:6).* The psalm from which this verse is quoted contains a prayer of the godly Jewish remnant, offered during the Tribulation Period. In proof of this assertion, observe that in Verse 2, God is owned and addressed as "King." In Verse 7, intimation is given that the Temple has been rebuilt in Jerusalem, for turning away from it when it has been defiled by "the Abomination of Desolation," the remnant say, *But as for me I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your Holy Temple.* In Verse 10, we find them praying for the destruction of their enemies, which is in parallel with Revelation 6:10. It is during that time that the faithful remnant will exclaim, *You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man (v. 6).*

*The Bloody and Deceitful Man* views the Antichrist in relation to the Jews. In the earlier stages of his public career, he poses as their friend and benefactor. He recognizes their rights as a separate State and appears eager to protect their autonomy. He makes a formal covenant with them (Dan. 9:27) and their peace and security seem assured. But a few years later he comes out in his true character. His fair speeches and professions of friendship are seen to be false. He breaks his covenant (Psalm 55:20) and turns upon the Jews in fury. Their benefactor is now their worst enemy. The protector of their interests now aims to cut them off from being a nation in the earth (Psalm 83:4). Thus is he rightfully *the Bloody and Deceitful Man*.

## 6. THE WICKED ONE

The wicked [One] in his *pride persecutes the poor; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised*. . . . The wicked [One] in his *proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts* (Psalm 10:2, 4). This entire psalm is about “the wicked”—or more specifically, the *Wicked One*. The opening verse gives the key to its dispensational scope. It contains the cry of the Jewish remnant during the Tribulation period, here expressed as “Times of Trouble” (cf. Jer. 30:7). So desperate is the situation of the true Israel, it seems as though Jehovah must have deserted them—*Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble?* (v. 1). Then follows a remarkably full description of their archenemy, the *Wicked One*. His pride (v. 2), his depravity: “He renounces the Lord” (v. 3), his blasphemy: “God is in none of His thoughts” (v. 4), his grievous ways (v. 5), his consuming egotism (v. 6), his deceitfulness (v. 7), his treachery (v. 8), his cruelty (vv. 9, 10), and his complacent pride (v. 11) are all described. Then the Remnant cries, *Arise, O LORD! O God, lift up Your hand! Do not forget the humble*. . . . *Break the arm of the wicked and the evil man; Seek out his wickedness until You find none* (vv. 12 and 15). The whole psalm should be carefully studied.

## 7. THE MAN OF THE EARTH

*To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, That the man of the earth may oppress no more* (Psalm 10:18). The *Wicked One* describes his character; the *Man of the Earth* defines his position. The one speaks of his awful depths of depravity, the other of his vast dominions. The sphere of his operations will be no mere local one; He will become a de facto world emperor. He will aspire to become a king of kings and lord of lords (Rev. 13:7).

When the true Messiah appeared on earth, Satan offered Him “all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them” if He would fall down and worship him. When the false Messiah appears, this offer will be repeated, the conditions will be met, and the tempting gift will be bestowed (Rev. 13:2). In consequence of this, he shall be the *Man of the Earth*; just as later, Messiah shall vanquish him and be recognized as the true “King over all the earth” (Zech. 14:7). *At this time, every tongue will . . . confess that [Yeshua the Messiah] is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil. 2:11).

## 8. THE MIGHTY MAN

*Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually* (Psalm 52:1). This is another psalm that is devoted to a description of this fearful character. Here again we have mention of his boastfulness (v. 1), his deceitfulness (v. 2), his depravity (v. 3), his egotism (v. 4), his riches (v. 7). His doom is also announced (v. 5). This title, the *Mighty Man*, refers to his immense wealth and possessions, and the power that they confer upon their possessor. It also points out a striking contrast: Messiah was the *Lowly Man*, not having anywhere to lay His head; the Antichrist will be the *Mighty Man*, of whom it is said, “*Here is the man who did not make God his strength, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, And strengthened himself in his wickedness*” (Psalm 52:7).

## 9. THE ENEMY

*Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the oppression of the wicked; For they bring down trouble upon me, And in wrath they hate me* (Psalm 55:3). The “me” here can be seen as Israel. The Enemy is another title used for the Antichrist in connection with God’s earthly People, a title that recurs several times both in the Psalms and the Prophets. It’s a designed contrast from that *Friend* who “sticks closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). This end-time *Enemy of Israel* oppresses them sorely. His duplicity and treachery are clearly seen here. Concerning him, Israel shall exclaim, *The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, But war was in his heart; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords* (Psalm 55:21). But his treachery will only be allowed to go so far before God stops him. In Isaiah 59:19 we read, *So shall they fear The name of the LORD from the west, And His glory from the rising of the sun; When the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him*. Let the serious Bible student be on the lookout for passages in the Old Testament that make mention of the *Enemy*.

## 10. THE ADVERSARY

*They said in their hearts, “Let us destroy them altogether.” They have burned up all the meeting places of God in the land. We do not see our signs; There is no longer any prophet; Nor is there any among us who knows how long. O God, how long will the adversary reproach? Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever?* (Psalm 74:8-10). This title occurs in other important passages, as well. Lamentations 4:11-12 places it in the context of the end-time: *The LORD has fulfilled His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion, And it has devoured its foundations. The kings of the earth, And all inhabitants of the world, Would not have believed That the adversary and the enemy Could enter the gates of Jerusalem*.

In Amos 3:11 we read, *Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “An adversary shall be all around the land; He shall sap your strength from you, And your palaces shall be plundered.” Adversary is a title that intimates his satanic origin, for the Greek word for devil (*diabolus*) means “adversary.”*

## 11. THE HEAD OVER MANY COUNTRIES

*He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries* (Psalm 110:6, KJV). The context here intimates that the Antichrist is in view. The psalm opens with the Father inviting the Son to sit at His right hand until His enemies shall be made His footstool. Then follows the affirmation that Jehovah will display His strength out of Jerusalem, and make His people Israel willing in the day of His power. Then, following Jehovah’s oath that Messiah is a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (which contemplates the exercise of His millennial and royal priesthood), we read, *The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound* (Heb., “execute”) *the [Head] over many countries* (vv. 5-6). The *Day of His Wrath* is the closing portion of the Tribulation Period, and in the Day of His Wrath, the LORD executes this *Head over Many Countries* by casting him, along with the False Prophet, into the eternal Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20). *The Head over Many Countries* refers to the Man of Sin as the Caesar of the last world empire, prior to the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom.

## 12. THE VIOLENT MAN

*Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men . . . Let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow him* (Psalm 140:1, 11b). This is another Psalm expressing the plaintive supplications of the godly remnant in the “time of Jacob’s trouble.” Three times over, the Antichrist is associated with violence. In Verse 1 the remnant prays to be delivered from him. In Verse 4 the petition is repeated. In Verse 11 his doom is foretold. Cry is made for God to take vengeance upon this bloody persecutor: *Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him* (Psalm 140:10-11, KJV). The *Violent Man* is a name which fully accords with his beast-like character. It tells of his ferocity and rapacity.

## 13. KING OF ASSYRIA

*“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. . . . Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, ‘I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the King of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks’* (Isa. 10:5, 12). We cannot here attempt an exposition of the important passage in which these verses occur—that, in subsequent chapters [in Pink’s book], we shall treat in detail of the Antichrist in the Psalms, and the Antichrist in the Prophets. Suffice it now to point out that it denotes the end-time (see vv. 12, 20), and that the leading characteristics of the Man of Sin can be clearly discerned in what is here said of Assyria personified (or the Assyrian). Almost all premillennial students of prophecy are agreed that *the King of Isaiah 30:33* is the Antichrist, and yet in the two verses which precede, this king is identified with “Assyria” or “the Assyrian” (KJV).

## 14. THE KING OF BABYLON

*That you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: “How the oppressor has ceased, The golden city ceased!”* (Isa. 14:4). It is our firm conviction that Scripture plainly teaches that there will be another Babylon which will eclipse the importance and glories of the one of the past, and that Babylon will be one of the headquarters of the Antichrist. He will have three: Jerusalem will be his *religious* headquarters, Rome his *political*, and Babylon his *commercial*. For those who desire to anticipate our future expositions [in the book], we recommend that they make a minute study of Isaiah 10, 11, 13, 14; Jeremiah 49:51, Zechariah 5, and Revelation 18.

## 15. SON OF THE MORNING

*“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!”* (Isa. 14:12). *Lucifer* is a Latin word which signifies the “morning star.” “All the ancient versions and all the Rabbins make the word a noun denoting the *bright one*, or, more specifically, *bright star*, or according to the ancients more specifically still, the *Morning Star* or harbinger of daylight” (Dr. J. A. Alexander). This term *Lucifer* has been commonly regarded as one of the names of Satan, and what is said here of the *Morning Star* is viewed as describing his apostasy. Against this interpretation we have nothing to say, except to remark that we are satisfied that it does not exhaust this remarkable Scripture. A detailed exposition must be reserved for a later chapter [in the book].

Sufficient now is to point out that however Isaiah 14 may look back to the distant past when, through pride, Satan fell from his original estate, it most evidently looks forward to a coming day and gives another picture of the Antichrist. In this same passage *Lucifer* is termed “the man that made the earth tremble” (v. 16), and in his blasphemous boast “I will be like the Most High” (v. 14), we have no difficulty in identifying him with the *Man of Sin* of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. The force of this particular title *Morning Star* is seen by comparing it with Revelation 22:16, where we learn that this is one of the titles of the God-Man. The *Morning Star* speaks of Messiah coming to usher in the great day of rest for the earth. In blasphemous travesty of this, Satan will send forth the mock messiah in an ill-fated effort to usher in a false millennium.

## 16. THE SPOILER

“Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, Devastation ceases, The oppressors are consumed out of the land. In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness” (Isa. 16:4-5). It will be observed that the verse in which the Antichrist is spoken of as the *Spoiler* comes immediately before the one where we read of the throne being established, a reference, of course, to the setting up of the Messianic Kingdom. These two things synchronize: the destruction of Antichrist and the beginning of the real Messiah’s reign; hence, we read here that the *Spoiler* “ceases.” A further reference to the *Man of Sin* under this title of the *Spoiler* is found in Jeremiah 6:26: *O daughter of my people, Dress in sackcloth And roll about in ashes! Make mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation; For the plunderer [or Spoiler] will suddenly come upon us.* This is another title which views the Antichrist in connection with Israel. After the return of many of the Jewish people to Israel, and after their rights have been owned by the Powers and their security and success seem assured, their enemy, filled with satanic malice, will seek their extermination. *The Spoiler* contrasts him with the Lord Yeshua who is the great Restorer (see Psalm 69:4).

## 17. THE PEG

“In that day, says the LORD of hosts, ‘the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that was on it will be cut off; for the LORD has spoken’” (Isa. 22:25). The last ten verses of this chapter should be read carefully. They furnish a striking foreshadowing of the end-time. Shebna was holding some office (note the term “responsibility” or government in Verse 21) over Israel. Apparently he was a usurper. God announced that he should be set aside in shame, and the man of His choice—Eliakim—should take his place. These historical figures merge into prophetic characters. In Verse 22, we read that God says, “The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; So he shall open, and no one shall shut; And he shall shut, and no one shall open.” As we know from Revelation 3:7, this refers to none other than the Lord Yeshua, and of Him it is here said, *I will fasten Him as a peg in a secure place, And he will become a glorious throne to his father’s house* (v. 23). Then, in the closing verse of the chapter we again read, “In that day, says the LORD of hosts, ‘the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall. . . .’” Just as Eliakim foreshadowed Messiah, so Shebna pointed forward to the Antichrist; and just as in Verse 23 we have a prophecy announcing the establishment of Messiah’s Kingdom, so in Verse 25 the overthrow of the false messiah’s kingdom is foretold when it says the *Anti-peg* will be removed.

## 18. THE SONG OF THE TERRIBLE ONES

*You will reduce the noise of aliens, As heat in a dry place; As heat in the shadow of a cloud, The song of the terrible ones will be diminished* (Isa. 25:5). The first five verses of this chapter contemplate the Enemy’s stronghold—Babylon—and the remainder of the chapter pictures the blessedness of the millennial era. In the fifth verse the Antichrist’s overthrow is announced: “*The Song of the Terrible Ones* will be diminished.” The Book of Revelation presents the lyrics of several Messianic songs. One of them is found in Chapter 5: *And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth”* (vv. 9-10). It’s a victory song of the righteous—powerful, harmonious, and triumphant. In the OT, God’s people sang impromptu songs about the victories He gave them—like the Song of Deborah in Judges 5. The Antichrist, evidently, will also have a victory song; but no one will ever hear it. The jubilant song of the righteous always drowns out the sad refrain of the wicked!



Adapted from “Names and Titles of the Antichrist,” Chapter 4 of *The Antichrist* by Arthur W. Pink (Swendel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1923). This material was first published nearly a century ago, so it’s been edited to clarify Pink’s intended meaning and to update archaic and non-Messianic expressions. The original, unaltered public domain text is available online at [www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/antichrist01.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/antichrist01.htm)

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952) served as a pastor for churches in Colorado, California, Kentucky, and South Carolina. He was a prolific writer and widely in demand as a speaker. His ministry took him throughout the United States, Australia, and Great Britain.

## 19. THE PROFANE AND WICKED PRINCE OF ISRAEL

“Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity [shall] end, thus says the Lord GOD: “Remove the turban, and take off the crown; Nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, Until He comes whose right it is, And I will give it to Him”” (Ezek. 21:25-27). *The Profane and Wicked Prince of Israel* here can be none other than the Antichrist, for we are expressly told that he’s a prince of Israel, whose day will come and whose iniquity will end. The reference is, of course, to Israel’s “iniquity,” and their iniquity shall end at the appearing of the true Messiah (see Daniel 9:24) when “He shall be a priest upon His throne” (see Zechariah 6:13). Here in Ezekiel, we see how the *Son of Perdition* will mimic the Messiah of God, for he, too, will be a priest-king: “Remove the turban” refers to his taking off the insignia of his *priesthood* (the Hebrew term is *mitznehpheth*, referring to the headpiece or turban worn only by the high priest of Israel); “take off the crown” points to the removal of the symbol of his evil *kingship*.

## 20. THE LITTLE HORN

“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” (Dan. 7:8). For a full description of the Antichrist under this title, see Daniel 7:8-11, 21-26; 8:9-12, 23-25. We must reserve our comments on these verses till a later chapter [in my book]. *Little Horn* refers to the lowly political origin of the Antichrist, and describes him as he is before he attains governmental supremacy.

## 21. THE PRINCE WHO IS TO COME

“And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (Dan. 9:26a). *The Prince Who Is to Come* title connects the Antichrist with the Roman Empire in its final, revived form, and presents him as the last of the Caesars.

## 22. THE VILE PERSON

“And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue” (Dan. 11:21). *This Vile Person* contrasts the Antichrist with “the Holy One of Israel.” His identity is established by noting what is predicted of him.

## 23. THE WILFUL KING

“Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done” (Dan. 11:36). The Antichrist will not only be the High Priest of the world’s religion, but he will also be *King Supreme* at the head of its government.

## 24. THE WORTHLESS SHEPHERD

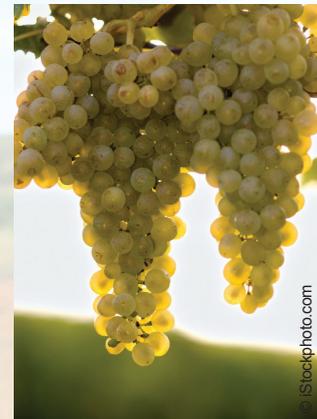
“For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land [who] will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. Woe to the worthless shepherd, Who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm And against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, And his right eye shall be totally blinded” (Zech. 11:16-17). This is in evident contrast from the Good Shepherd who gave His life for His sheep. The *Worthless Shepherd* of deluded Israel will prove himself the *Monster Desolator*, who shall bring upon that people the severest tribulations they have ever experienced!

## 25. THE ANGEL OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

“And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” (Rev. 9:11). “Abaddon” and “Apollyon” mean Destroyer. The *Spoiler* of Isaiah 16:4 is rendered *Destroyer* in Jeremiah 4:7. That his name (*Angel of the Bottomless Pit*) is here given in the Hebrew and the Greek shows that he will be connected with both the Jews and the Gentiles.

# Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



## From the Lawn to the Lord

**Peter Parkas, CJFM Northeast representative (New Jersey)** hired a young man to take care of their house lawn. After “Joshua” had finished cutting the grass and whacking the weeds, he and Peter engaged in a conversation about the lawn, which ultimately led to a discussion about the Bible. At first, Joshua didn’t understand the Gospel message. Peter took his time and explained the Gospel in detail and when he had finished, he answered Joshua’s questions. Joshua then responded with an emphatic “yes” when Peter asked him if he would like to pray to receive Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Peter now has the privilege of discipling him.

## The Chat

While in an online religious chat room recently, Peter encountered an anti-missionary—someone whose goal is to dissuade Jewish people from considering the Gospel and reading the New Testament. Even though Peter showed the man numerous Messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures, he refused to accept the evidence and even claimed that Peter was taking a “shot gun” approach to the Bible. According to him, none of the passages were in context—they were just random. Please pray for the Lord to soften this man’s hardened heart.

## A United Burden for the Lost

**Richard Hill, CJFM representative (Las Vegas) and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation**, was blessed recently when his assistant, Pat Chang, shared the following news with him. She told him that 15 believers from her home church, Burton Baptist Church in Show Low, AZ, including Pat and her husband Jim, would be joining Rich and his team in reaching out to the lost of Las Vegas with the Good News. Wearing their Jewish evangelistic T-shirts, their first stop was the Fashion Show Mall. They were well received by the Israeli Jewish retailers because of the team’s obvious love for them and their support for Israel. This enabled members of the team to share the Gospel message of Yeshua (Jesus) with many of them. Please pray that God’s Word would not return void (Isaiah 55:11).

The next stop was the University of Las Vegas (UNLV) campus. The team set up a tent and computer so that any student passing by could watch the “Evolution vs. God” video. In two days, the group passed out 1,800 DVDs and 500 tracts. In the three days of witnessing, to His honor and glory, the Good News was shared with 88 Gentiles and 10 Jewish people—11 individuals prayed to receive the Lord, one of whom is a Muslim student. Rich writes: “We are already talking about inviting Burton Baptist Church to join us in Las Vegas next year. Please pray for our plans to be God’s plans and that the 11 who received salvation would grow mightily in the Lord.”

## A Blessed Erev Rosh Hashanah

**CJFM Southeast representative, Michelle Beadle (New Orleans)**, has held a dinner at her house on the first night of Rosh Hashanah for the last four years. This year 15 people joined her for a Sephardic Seder; foods that symbolize a desire for a sweet, prosperous, and blessed New Year are served. In the Torah, Rosh Hashanah is actually called *Yom HaZikaron*, the Day of Remembrance, or *Yom Teruah*, the Day of the Blowing of the Shofar. The 15 guests consisted of 10 unsaved Jewish women, one Messianic Jewish woman (who had prayed to receive Yeshua as her Messiah at Michelle’s Erev Rosh Hashanah dinner two years ago), and four Gentile men. The theme for the Seder this year was “Resurrection.” Michelle writes: “We had a lively discussion about the fact that God is able to raise us from the dead. I am thrilled to report that they had a wonderful time and enjoyed the teaching—they even promised to return for another meeting!” Please pray for their salvation.

*“Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established”* (Prov 16:3).

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# 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:** *What's your opinion of the theory that the "mark of the beast" will be either the number 666 or a UPC code tattooed on the forehead or the right hand—or possibly a computer chip implanted just under the skin?*

**ANSWER:** Nothing in the Bible has been the subject of more speculation and folklore than the number 666 and the mark of the beast. One of the pertinent biblical texts is found in Revelation 13:16-18:

He [i.e., the Beast] causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

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.

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.

Since the "mark" belongs to someone known as the Beast, let's begin with him. The Hebrew and Greek terms for "beast" (meaning "living thing" or "animal") appear in Daniel and Revelation where they designate political empires or emperors. In Revelation 13, there are two Beasts. The first one arises from "the sea" (which is not a literal ocean, but rather the "sea" of humanity) and is the political power behind the Dragon's (Satan's) end-time program (v. 1). He is otherwise known as the Antichrist (1 John 2:18). The second Beast comes up out of "the earth" (Heb., *ha-Eretz*, which can mean the Land of Israel) and is the religious leader who supports the first Beast's quest for power and dominion (v. 11).<sup>1</sup> In other passages, the second Beast is known as the False Prophet (16:13).

The first Beast, then, is the one with the mark. He's the end-time Antichrist—the political leader. So what's his mark? Some interpreters think it's a literal mark, like a tattoo, on the forehead and/or right hand (like the numbers the Nazis tattooed on Jewish people during the Holocaust). Others say it's a chip inserted under the skin. More likely, it's a metaphor (rather than a physical mark) for the Beast's "lordship" over (and control of) the ones who are marked—i.e., his followers. They will be rewarded for their loyalty by being allowed to participate in the global economic system (known in Revelation 17 and 18 as "Babylon").

The Antichrist is obviously keen on counterfeiting every possible aspect of God's end-time program—so if God "marks" his followers for purposes of ownership and protection (Rev. 7:3, 14:1),<sup>2</sup>

why wouldn't we expect the Beast to mark his followers, too?<sup>3</sup> The Bible says, "The Lord knows those who are His" (2 Tim. 2:19)—and the Beast will likewise know those who are *his*.

Revelation 13:17 mentions three interrelated things: the Beast's mark, his name, and the number of his name.

### 1. The mark (of the Beast)

As we've already said, the mark signifies ownership, protection, and provision. The Antichrist will take care of his followers during the Tribulation. The rebels (believers) will be outside his global economic network, so they will have difficulty buying or selling anything during that time. The advent of technologies like computer chips, UPC codes, and credit cards in modern times—as well as the global networking of the world's major economies—have helped us understand how easily such a scenario could become reality.

### 2. The name (of the Beast)

The writer of Revelation was faced with a dilemma. John very likely knew that the final Antichrist hadn't yet been born, so he didn't want believers to waste valuable time trying to connect him with anyone in their generation. In government work, classified information is only divulged on a "need to know" basis; and in this instance, the only people who will need to know the Antichrist's "secret identity" are believers during the Tribulation. So how would John convey this information cryptically across the generations to those future believers?

### 3. The number of his name.

In ancient languages like Hebrew and Greek, they didn't have numbers. So they used letters to represent numbers—like A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, and so on. So you could determine the numerical equivalent of a name by adding up the values of the letters in that name. (The name "Gary," for example, adds up to 51 in English gematria.) One thing we learned from the excavations at Pompeii was that ancient lovers used this type of numerology to convey romantic messages that only their beloved would recognize and understand. One example (in Greek) is this graffiti uncovered in the ancient, doomed city: "I love her whose number is 545."<sup>4</sup> Chances are, the message would only be understood by the one for whom it was intended.

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So John provides the numerical value of the Beast's name: 666. It may seem cryptic or odd to us today; but there's little doubt that a first century reader would have readily understood it. One evangelical commentator explains:

Thus it is not difficult to understand why most commentators have understood John's words "Let him calculate the number . . . His number is 666" to be an invitation to the reader to play gematria and discover the identity of the beast. This interpretation is not new. Irenaeus (second century) mentions that many names of contemporary persons and entities were being offered in his day as solutions to this number mystery. Yet he cautioned against the practice and believed that the name of the Antichrist was deliberately concealed because he did not exist in John's day. The name would be secret till the time of his future appearance in the world. Irenaeus expressly refutes the attempt of many to identify the name with any of the Roman emperors. He feels, however, that the gematria approach is John's intended meaning but warns the church against endless speculations (*Contra Haereses* 29:30).<sup>5</sup>

This connection with Irenaeus is significant because church historians sometimes refer to him as the Apostle John's spiritual

grandson. His mentor was Polycarp (AD 69—156), who was (according to tradition) a disciple of John, the writer of Revelation. So when Irenaeus is expounding on Revelation and warns that the Antichrist's identity is unknowable until he begins to fulfill the ancient prophecies, it comes with some authority.

It's unfortunate that this number 666 has generated so many myths and superstitions over the centuries. Many years ago, an evangelist friend of ours moved his family to another state. When he went to the local post office to rent a mailbox, they randomly assigned him box number 666. Some of his friends were horrified and told him he should request a different box, but he steadfastly refused. He said he wasn't going to be intimidated by a silly superstition. I always admired him for that.

During the Tribulation, believers should be able to identify the Beast by triangulating this "number of his name" with the other biblical data. In the meantime, however, during the present church age, we should avoid speculating about his identity and concentrate our efforts on more useful and productive pursuits. 

<sup>1</sup>When we make reference to NT words or passages in Hebrew, we're drawing on the Hebrew New Testament or New Covenant (*Berit HaChadashah*). The original NT, of course, was written in Greek (although the writers no doubt consulted Hebrew sources). Hebrew and Aramaic translations came later—and there were many of them. The fact that the False Prophet comes up "out of *Ha-Eretz*," which could be translated "out of the Land (of Israel)" has led some commentators (like J. Vernon McGee) to suggest that he will be Jewish.

<sup>2</sup>We also find this concept of marking/ownership in the Book of Ezekiel, where God "marked" (figuratively speaking) His people on their foreheads. When judgment was meted out to the ungodly, those who had God's mark on their foreheads were spared because they belonged to Him and therefore came under His protection (9:4-6).

<sup>3</sup>"Again we have the great imitation: believers have the 'name' of Christ on their foreheads (22:4), while the unsaved have the 'name of the beast' on theirs" (Grant Osborne in *The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Revelation* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002], 518).

<sup>4</sup>"Revelation" by Alan Johnson in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 12* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 533.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.