GLOBAL PEACE

AND THE RISE OF ANTICHRIST

Dave Hunt



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Except where otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in this book are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

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The Counterfeit Christ

Somewhere, at this very moment, on planet Earth, the Antichrist is almost certainly alive—biding his time, awaiting his cue. Banal sensationalism? Far from it! That likelihood is based upon a sober evaluation of current events in relation to Bible prophecy. Already a mature man, he is probably active in politics, perhaps even an admired world leader whose name is almost daily on everyone's lips. Or he could be the head of a multinational corporation, a little-known international banker of great wealth and behind-the-scenes influence, or a sports hero—or he may arise suddenly from total anonymity. Somewhere he is being meticulously groomed, though as yet he probably has no more inkling than do those who encounter him daily of the ultimate role for which Satan is preparing him and will, one momentous day, utterly possess him.

Whoever and wherever he is, one passion rules this remarkable man—a lust for power. Even so, benevolence, prudence, integrity, and principle mark his circumspect public behavior. Certainly he seems to be no more evil than the accepted norm in today's amoral society. It may be that to this point in his life he is still convinced that his motives are altogether pure and unselfish.

The obsession that drives this extraordinary man to excel in whatever he does has tempered the brilliant qualities and inflamed the explosive charisma that makes him Satan's chosen Messiah to rule the world. Just as Judas's lust for money made him vulnerable to Satan, so this man's passion for power has made him similarly vulnerable. Satan has found in him the one through whom he can effect an even more fiendish betrayal of Christ. The Antichrist is so driven by his dream to rule—yes, perhaps in his own eyes, to save—the world, that he will pay any price, even satanic possession, to make his mark in history. So it has been predestined and so it will be.

Antichrist! The media has so conditioned our minds that the very word instantly conjures up the image of a sinister man who exudes evil from every pore. But Hollywood caricatures play into the hands of the real Antichrist, since no suspicion will rest upon this one whose admirable qualities so well conceal his dark designs. When the time has come for his ascension to power—it will be in the midst of an unprecedented global crisis—he will be hailed as the world's savior, and so he will appear to be.

The apostle Paul dispels popular misconceptions and gives us the awesome facts: "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness..." (2 Corinthians 11:14,15). Nor is the Antichrist an ordinary "minister" of Satan. We may therefore be certain that he will appear as the purest "angel of light" that Satan can produce. Indeed, his very title implies as much.

While the Greek prefix "anti" generally means "against" or "opposed to," it can also mean "in the place of" or "a substitute for." The Antichrist will embody both meanings. He will oppose Christ while pretending to be Christ. That masquerade is made all the easier in today's society, where the distinction between good and evil has in many cases become obscured past recognition and where our most prestigious universities and seminaries have all but eliminated the concept of moral absolutes from their thinking.

Society has been undergoing a step-by-step preparation for the advent of Satan's Messiah, and in our moment in history it has at last produced a generation so perverted that it will mistake the Antichrist for Christ. In the name of freedom and right of choice, this most blest of nations has condemned its unborn to the cruelest of deaths, it has made a mockery of the sanctity of marriage, it entertains itself with films and music centered on themes of sadism, Satanism, and sexual perversions, it has all but destroyed millions of its youth with drugs, and it has created an urban war zone and a poisoned planet. Evil will soon be ripe for harvest.

Even if one should expect such moral and ecological devastation in a fallen world, what of the church? Those who call themselves Christians, and even born-again evangelicals, listen to the same music, attend the same movies, watch the same television programs, worship the same jaded and lost heroes, and live much the same lifestyle. Compared with the generation of 50 years ago, they are biblically illiterate. This is especially true when it comes to the subject of prophecy. Their consciences may be pricked and they may even repent of their sins at periodic revivals or emotional Sunday evening services, but it would scarcely occur to any of them that more is involved—that their generation is ripening for the Antichrist to make his appearance.

Antichrist? Most people take him about as seriously as Santa Claus or the Tooth Fairy. All they know about him are the trashy distortions bred of horror films. Yet the awful truth is far more terrifying, even though at first the world will seem to have entered a golden age of peace and prosperity under the most brilliant and benevolent leader in history.

Jesus warned that many would come claiming to be the Christ. These numerous lesser antichrists who were already in the world, as the apostle John explained in 1 John 2:18, would prepare the way for the real Antichrist who would appear in the "last days." Behold the ultimate deception: Satan posing as God, the Antichrist masquerading as the true Christ, and not just the world, but an apostate church as well, totally taken in by the charade. Instead of a frontal assault against Christianity, the evil one will pervert the church from within by posing as its founder. He will cunningly misrepresent Christ

while pretending to be Christ. And by that process of substitution he will undermine and pervert all that Christ truly is. Anything less than such a diabolically malevolent strategy would be unworthy of Satan's genius.

This is an altogether different scenario from that envisioned by most people. If they believe in a literal Antichrist at all, they presume he will be an obviously evil ogre whom any child would immediately recognize. In fact, he will be the closest counterfeit of Christ that Satan can produce. Completely deceived by this brazen masquerade, the world will hail him as its deliverer.

And right there is where the plot thickens. If the Antichrist will indeed pretend to be the Christ, then his followers must be "Christians"! The church of that day will, without a dissenting voice, hail him as its leader.

Such a perverse and total deception is beyond the ability of the imagination to conceive. It is certainly not what the average person has been led to believe, much less what the media has implanted in the minds of the public at large. Yet this is the picture which the Bible presents and to which current events ever more clearly seem to point. Such is the thesis which we will pursue in the following pages.

It is immediately apparent that such an unthinkable scenario requires certain preconditions to make it credible. First of all, the apostate church in the last days must become so corrupted that it actually opposes what Christ taught while at the same time insisting that it is faithful to Him. Satan's lie must be honored as God's truth without the church leaders who deceive and those who are deceived even knowing that such a metamorphosis has occurred. Moreover, that perversion must have taken place from within the "last days" church itself even before the Antichrist appears.

Could Paul have meant anything less when he warned, "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away [apostasy, turning from the faith] first, and [then] that man of sin [the Antichrist] be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:3)? While

the apostasy no doubt is related to a simultaneous general moral decay in society affecting every arena of life from the family to education, business, and politics, the primary meaning is a departure from the truth of God's Word. Sound doctrine will be despised (2 Timothy 4:1-4). For many people objective truth will have been replaced by feelings and experience. For others, intellectualism and skepticism will have justified what seems to be a very reasonable new faith.

Jesus Himself, who raised the question as to whether there would be any faith whatsoever on the earth when He returned (Luke 18:8), used language similar to Paul's. When His disciples asked Him what would characterize the last days just prior to His return, He explained that it would be a time of the greatest religious deception the world had seen to that point, or would ever see again. He prefaced His remarks with this solemn warning: "Take heed that no man deceive you" (Matthew 24:4; cf. 24:5,11,24).

Those who heed such warnings will not succumb to the spirit of the last days. Like God, who weeps over a rebellious world and delays His judgment to give men time to repent, they will have a passion to bring His truth to the world. Everyone who loves God more than this world and to whom His evaluation of one's life means more than the fickle opinions of men will be kept from the delusion that will sweep the world. Those who fear God and keep His Word have no fear of what others may think or say or do to them.

The world must be primed both religiously and politically to embrace the Antichrist when he suddenly rises to power. If "Christianity" is to be the official world religion (which must be the case if the Antichrist claims to be Christ), then it must become broad enough to accommodate all of the world's faiths. As for the political climate, the world must be united in the twin causes of global peace and ecological rescue when this man appears.

Through the many astonishing events of the past 24 months, political leaders have found themselves suddenly and almost

miraculously transported into a new world where such a favorable atmosphere seems likely to prevail. Much credit must go to the initiative taken by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. His unusual insight and courage have opened Eastern Europe to a previously inconceivable level of intercourse with the outside world, have ended the Cold War, and have begun a new era of mutual trust and growing partnership between the United States and the Soviet Union.

For the past 70 years we have lived in fear lest Communist totalitarianism move West to swallow the free world. But suddenly before our very eyes we see a surprising new picture emerging, taking even the most brilliant strategists completely by surprise: Democracy is moving East! Free elections are being held even in the USSR. Why the new freedom could play into the hands of the Antichrist will become clear as we proceed.

Yes, China has suppressed those seeking similar reforms. Yet even she must eventually succumb to world opinion or suffer increasingly costly isolation from an emerging and growing international community which has become remarkably united and outspoken. The Islamic world, too, remains tied to its own agenda and is still susceptible to the sudden call for a Holy War against the rest of mankind. But in Arab countries as well as the rest of the world there is a fermenting opposition to autocratic rulers, both religious and secular, and a great longing for democracy that cannot be denied much longer. There is a swelling international grassroots movement of great power that could well spread democracy worldwide, and perhaps do so in a shorter time than now seems conceivable.

In spite of periodic flare-ups of hostilities and serious political problems, the promise of peace on earth has never seemed more realistic than at the present. Within a surprisingly short time it may actually seem that mankind has at last united to eliminate the threat of major war from this planet. Global peace will have been achieved at last. Strangely enough, that may be the worst thing that could happen, as we shall see.

In the following pages we will trace the events and processes which appear to be moving the props in place for Antichrist's grand entry onto center stage. The curtain is about to rise for the final act of human history as we have known it. While God has deliberately hidden much from our eyes, He has told us what He wants us to know about the incredible face-to-face confrontation between Christ and Antichrist toward which events now hasten—and about the part that each of us must play.

Prophecy is a difficult subject, and many people have been disillusioned by the failure of false interpretations. Others feel that the subject is necessarily morbid and depressing and therefore to be avoided. But the true picture is not all gloom and doom, since prophecy also offers an unprecedented opportunity for those who understand the "signs of the times" and are willing to believe and act upon what the Bible declares for our day.

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