

The Antichrist and the Muslim Mahdi (Part 1)

Many people—religious and non-religious—are asking questions about a word they hear the media use when referring to ISIS and other Islamist jihadists. That word is *apocalyptic*, which is used when specifically referring to the fatalism of Islamists.

People wonder, why do so many Muslims (both Sunni and Shi'ite) operate with such an “apocalyptic,” end-of-world mindset?

Our secular society, however, coupled with the media's carelessness, is bandying about words like *apocalyptic* without using them properly and without explanation. That creates a great deal of confusion for some, many of whom just throw up their hands in resignation and say, “I don't understand this.”

But for those who want to understand, I am offering this two-part column, taking excerpts from my newest book, *Jesus, Jihad, and Peace*. I hope this will put things into perspective, so when the media says that an Islamist entity (such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, Iran, etc.) operate with an apocalyptic vision, you can make sense of it.

The word *apocalypse* does not, in fact, refer to a disastrous, catastrophic, end-of-world event. It's a Greek word, the root of which means *revelation*, or revealing things that are hidden. For instance, we know the last book of the Bible as *Revelation*, but in the original Greek language, it is *Apokalupsae*. It reveals what is happening in the heavenly realm, as well as events in the future.

The Concept of the Antichrist

Both the Old Testament and New Testament spoke of an end-times figure, the *Antichrist*, some 600 years or more before Islam

came on the scene. That timing will be important when I explain Islam's "end of time" coming of a Mahdi in my next column.

The Antichrist is known by various names. Paul calls him "the lawless one," "the man of lawlessness," and "the man doomed to destruction" who "will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (2 Thess. 2:1-12). The most detailed description of the Antichrist is in Revelation 13, where the Apostle John refers to the Antichrist as "the beast." The Old Testament prophet Daniel describes the abominable works of the Antichrist, but gives him no name or title (Dan. 9:27).

Who, then, is the Antichrist, whose brief but terrible reign is predicted in both the Old and New Testaments? He will be a world leader of unparalleled political, military and religious power. He will be charming, persuasive and popular beyond measure. The world will not know him as the "Antichrist," but by some attractive name and appealing title. But just as the word "Antichrist" suggests, he will be the opposite of the Lord Jesus Christ in every way. Everything Christ is, the Antichrist is not; everything Christ is not, the Antichrist is.

Jesus came from heaven (John 6:38); the Antichrist comes from the Abyss, the spiritual domain of evil (Rev. 11:7). Jesus came in the Name of the Father; the Antichrist comes in his own name (John 5:43). Jesus was despised by the world (Is. 53:3); the Antichrist will be worshipped by the world (Rev. 13:3-4). Jesus came in humility as a servant (Phil. 2:7-8); the Antichrist comes in pride, claiming to be God (2 Thess. 2:4; Dan. 11:36). Jesus is the truth (John 14:6); the Antichrist is the lie (2 Thess. 2:9-11). Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 1:1; Luke 1:35); the Antichrist is the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:3, KJV).

The Apostle Paul tells us that the mystery (or secret) of godliness is that God Himself has appeared to us in human flesh (1 Tim. 3:16)—and that the mystery (or secret) of lawlessness is that Satan has produced a counterfeit Christ, the Antichrist, Satan wrapped in human flesh (2 Thess. 2:6-8). Jesus is the true Shepherd; Satan will have his evil shepherd, the Antichrist. Jesus is the Holy One of God; the Antichrist will be the lawless one of Satan. Jesus is the Man of Sorrows; the Antichrist will be the man of sin.

One Antichrist and many antichrists

First of all, the Antichrist is coming—a lawless man who will come in Satan’s power, demanding to be worshipped as God, destroying all those who love God. But John tells us that there are many other antichrists, lesser deceivers who are also self-exalting, evil and destructive. They are antichrists, but they are not *the* Antichrist.

Jesus tells us that, shortly before His return, the Antichrist will arise during a time of global chaos and confusion, when the world is in political, social, financial and ecological upheaval. The terrified people of the world, desperate for a strong leader, will turn to this man and give him control of the governments of the world.

Daniel tells us that the Antichrist will speak “boastfully” (Dan. 7:8), yet it is clear that these will not be empty boasts. The Antichrist will appear to possess superhuman brilliance. He’ll be the ultimate smooth talker, the greatest con man who ever lived, and he’ll unite the nations under his rule. At first, he’ll seem to be a wise and benevolent dictator, bringing peace, prosperity and hope. But once he is firmly in control of the gears and levers of power, he’ll reveal his true intentions.

The way has been paved for such a leader. Atheists, humanists, New Age mystics, Hindus, Buddhists and Islamists have little

in common with each other—but they all share in the belief that Jesus is *not* the only way to salvation. There are even many self-styled “Christians” who deny the Lord’s claim to be the *only* way to God. So it will be easy for the Antichrist to establish himself to many as an acceptable alternative.

In these days of muddled and confused worldviews, it is vitally important to know the truth. After all, Jesus said, “The truth will set you free.” As events unfold, we need to see them not only through the camera’s lens, but also through the lens of biblical revelation.

That the Antichrist is coming is known—only the timing is unknown. Although we know not the hour of night that the thief comes, we must be prepared nonetheless.

In next week’s article (Part 2), we’ll take a look at the striking parallels between the Antichrist and Islam’s Mahdi (savior).

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