

# How To Identify The Antichrist

One of the most fascinating prophecies about Christ and the antichrist is found in the eleventh chapter of the book of Zechariah. In that chapter we are told that God commanded the prophet Zechariah to play two different roles—as an actor would in a theater. He was to play the role of two different shepherds. God also told him that the nation of Israel was doomed to be destroyed. Then the prophet Zechariah wrote these words in verses 7-8.

So I pastured the flock doomed to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. And I took for myself two staves: the one I called Favor and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock. Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me. Zechariah 11:7-8 (NASB)



First, Zechariah tells us that God had commanded him to act as a good shepherd. He was told to pasture “the flock doomed to slaughter.” That is, Israel was going to be destroyed. Zechariah also says that he had two staves called Favor and Union. He adds that he annihilated three shepherds in his role as an actor. Now Scripture does not reveal the identity of these three shepherds, but it has been tradition to understand them as representing the priests, scribes and elders of Israel. That is, the religious leaders of Israel were killed. Why did this happen? Notice that God said that He was “impatient with them.”

While God does not give us a reason, it appears that God was saying that He was tired of their unbelief and rejection. He says they were weary of Him. He may have been referring to Israel’s pattern of unbelief and rejection of their Messiah. So, the Roman army destroyed them in A.D. 70.

Therefore, in verses 9-10 we read,

Then I said, “I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another’s flesh.” I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peo-

ples. Zechariah 11:9-10 (NASB)

When the prophet cut the staff called Favor into pieces, that act illustrated the truth that Israel had lost favor with God.

Verses 11-12 are about the betrayal of Christ and His crucifixion.

I said to them, “If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!” So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.” So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD. Zechariah 11:12-13 (NASB)

Notice that Zechariah said, “They weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages.” Since Zechariah is playing the role of the Good Shepherd or Christ, it is easy to understand that the 30

shekels of silver are prophetic of the money given to Judas so that he would betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16). The 30 shekels of silver is symbolic of Christ being valued at 30 shekels of silver—the purchase price of a slave. This part of the prophecy ends with Israel killing Christ, and Israel being destroyed in 70 A.D. At this point in the prophecy, Israel is not in the land that they had occupied since their exodus from Egypt.

Then the prophecy shifts to the future in verse 15. The prophet Zechariah now plays the second role of the foolish shepherd. Read verses 15-16 and notice what God said He would do.

The LORD said to me, “Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd. For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hoofs.” Zechariah 11:15-16 (NASB)

Now let me ask a question. What are we told that God said He would do? He said He would raise up a foolish shepherd who will not care for the flock. Verse 17 is about the foolish shepherd and worthless shepherd,

Woe to the worthless shepherd  
Who leaves the flock!  
A sword will be on his arm  
And on his right eye!  
His arm will be totally withered  
And his right eye will be blind.  
Zechariah 11:17 (NASB)

Notice the verse says a sword will be on one of his arms and on his right eye which is blind. The point is that the sword will cut off one arm and pluck out one eye. Zechariah played the role of the foolish and worthless shepherd who would eventually abandon the flock. The prophet played the role of a horrible shepherd who will be the opposite of Jesus, the good shepherd. Yet the world will follow him because he will be the antichrist whom God has given to them. Dr. J. Vernon McGee made the following comment about this verse.

He is called here “the idol shepherd,” meaning the worthless shepherd. He is no good, he is of no value, he is the great deceiver. Dr. Merrill Unger is quite a Hebrew scholar, and I like his translation of this verse: “Woe! Worthless shepherd, forsaker of the flock! Let the sword be against his arm and against his right eye! His arm shall be completely dried up and his right eye shall be completely blind.”

This “foolish” shepherd is of no benefit, but the world will go after him. When Israel rejected the Good Shepherd who was promised, they were scattered worldwide. And the gospel, which the Lord Jesus said would begin at Jerusalem and go to the ends of the earth, is being preached today. It is my personal conviction that through the medium of radio we will be enabled to get the gospel to the ends of the earth. The interval in which the gospel has been going out has already been a long one—over nineteen hundred years. Then this false shepherd will appear. He is worthless, but he is going to promise everything. He will be the supreme politician, promising everything in the book and out of the book.

“Woe to the idol [worthless] shepherd that leaveth the flock!” The word woe is the Hebrew “hoy,” and the very sound of it denotes trouble that is coming—“Hoy, hoy, hoy!”<sup>1</sup>

Who is the foolish and worthless shepherd? He is the antichrist.

**THE ANTICHRIST AS A SHEPHERD.** The important point is that because Israel did reject the Good Shepherd whom God the Father gave them, He will give them a foolish and worthless shepherd. The antichrist will be their future reward. Since they did not like the Good Shepherd, then maybe they will enjoy a man who has the opposite characteristics. Maybe they will like the foolish, worthless, and evil shepherd. He is their reward for rejecting Christ.

In our last two studies, we learned about twelve signs that help us understand when the rapture, tribulation, the second coming and the start of the millennial kingdom are near. We pointed out in the last study that any sign about the second coming of Christ was also a sign that indicated the rapture

1. J. Vernon McGee. Proverbs through Malachi. Thru the Bible. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1982. Vol. 3, p. 970.

and tribulation are nearer. Why? Because the time from the rapture to the start of the kingdom is only seven years. We ended that study with 2 Thessalonians 2:3. This study will continue with verse 3 and end with verse 5 because verses 3-5 will provide us important information about the foolish and worthless shepherd—the antichrist. We are going to learn six facts about his external conduct that will be horrible. Once we understand what his external behavior will be like, we will also understand his character. So, let us begin.

**1) THE ANTICHRIST WILL BE COMPLETELY LAWLESS.** The first external behavior of the antichrist is described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. It says,

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction . . . 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (NASB)

Here we are told the antichrist will be a man of lawlessness. The Greek word that is translated as “lawlessness” is *anomia*. It is a compound word of “a” and “nomia.” The first word means “not” and the second word means “law.” That is, the antichrist will be a “no-law” man. He will be above the law. He will ignore laws and, if necessary, change them. He will do as he pleases without constraints. He will believe he is above the law.

*Anomia* is also used in 1 John 3:4. It says,

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 1 John 3:4 (NASB)

This verse teaches us that when we sin, we are lawless. We violate God’s laws. Just imagine all of the sin that is being committed by our politicians, the citizens, and us! God views every person as a violator of His laws. So we are all sinners. But God does not give unbelievers tickets for violating the law. Instead, He will send them to hell. He will send you to hell if you are an unbeliever.

This helps us identify the antichrist. He is called the man of lawlessness for a reason. He will be an unbeliever who will violate both God’s laws and human laws. He will not be controlled by anyone whether they are rich, powerful, or even a religious leader. No law will stop this man from doing what

he desires. So look for a national leader who willfully violates God’s laws, the laws of his nation, and international laws. He will be a no-law man: a man who rejects Christ. This helps us understand his character. He will be the ultimate lawless man!

**2) THE ANTICHRIST WILL BE A DESTROYER.** The second external behavior of the antichrist is also found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. We are also told he is the “son of destruction.” The Greek word that is described as “destruction” is *apoleia*. The word has the meaning “to cause the destruction of persons, objects, or institutions.” The word can also mean “perdition.” Remember that Judas Iscariot is called “the son of perdition” in John 17:12. The only other person in the Bible who is called “the son of perdition” is the antichrist. Both Judas and the antichrist are alike in their opposition to Christ.

The other meaning of *apoleia* is destroyer. Judas was a destroyer, and the antichrist will destroy people for his own personal gain. We see this already in the political arena. Politicians make false accusations about their opponents in order to destroy their families, careers, and power. Politicians punish people, states, and nations who do not cooperate with them. The antichrist will do the same thing. He will make all other past and present politicians look like amateurs. He will operate with intrigue and skill. That is why he is called the “son of destruction.” This helps us identify the antichrist. He will destroy anyone and anything in order to accomplish what he wants.

**3) THE ANTICHRIST WILL BE A DECEIVER.** The third external behavior of the antichrist is that he will be a deceiver. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 is an important verse for it warns us about the antichrist. It says,

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 (NASB)

There are a number of important facts in this verse. But I want to focus on only one important fact. The important fact is the

antichrist will be very skillful in the art of great deception. Notice that verse 10 says, the antichrist will operate “with all the deception of wickedness.” We are also told he will deceive “those who perish.” We should ask, “Who are those who perish?” Paul tells us. They are those who do “not receive the love of the truth.” Unbelievers do not love truth. They do not love the Bible. They prefer lies. Because unbelievers will be deceived, they will think the antichrist is a good man, even a great man. They will even worship him. The antichrist will be the ultimate deceiver. This is the third characteristic that helps us identify the antichrist.

**4) THE ANTICHRIST WILL OPPOSE GOD.** The fourth external behavior of the antichrist is found in the next verse, 2 Thessalonians 2:4. The verse says,

... who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (NASB)

There are two descriptions of the antichrist’s behavior in this verse. The first one is that the antichrist will oppose “every so-called god or object of worship.” The Greek word for “oppose” has the meaning of “being hostile” toward someone. That is, the antichrist’s internal attitude will be hostility toward every religion. He will hate religion. He will hate Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and the cults. He will hate every religion, but especially Christianity. For example, Revelation 13:7 says about the antichrist,

It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. Revelation 13:7 (NASB)

The verse reveals he will kill Christians. Daniel 7:21 and 25 tell us the same thing. This helps us identify the antichrist. He will be opposed to all religions, especially Christianity. This means he will not be fearful of any god, including the true God. He is fearless.

**5) ANTICHRIST WILL EXALT HIMSELF AS GOD.** Yet, there will be one religion he will support and even demand that the people of the world follow. That is, he will want the

world to worship him. Remember he will be the foolish and worthless shepherd. His behavior and character will be opposite that of Christ, the good shepherd. He will be the anti-shepherd—the antichrist. He will be foolish because he demands that Israel and the rest of the world worship him.

That is exactly what we see in the fifth external behavior of the antichrist. This behavior is described in the rest of verse 4. It says,

... exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 (NASB)

Here we are told he will sit in the temple of God, which will be in the city of Jerusalem. When he does, he will declare that he is God. He will want to be the center of all worship. He will want to replace the god of every religion and cult. He will want to be just like the Caesars in Rome. But his greatest desire will be to replace the true God.

Now we need to read Daniel 9:26-27. These two verses describe the beginning of the antichrist’s role as a shepherd for Israel. In verse 26, the antichrist is called the “Prince who is to come.” The verse says the people of the “Prince who is to come” will destroy Jerusalem. That occurred in A.D. 70. That helps us understand that the antichrist will have his origin from the peoples who made up the old Roman Empire.

Daniel 9:27 continues speaking about him. We are told the antichrist will make a covenant or a peace treaty with Israel. Daniel 9:27 says,

And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate. Daniel 9:27 (NASB)

For some reason he wants to protect Israel as a shepherd protects a flock of sheep. But this passage of Scripture does not tell us why he will do this. It is Zechariah 11:16 that tells us God will motivate him to do this. Remember, God said that

He will give Israel this man. So, with the peace treaty he starts shepherding Israel. He is foolish because he does not understand what is going to happen to him.

In Matthew 24:15, Jesus affirmed the prophecy of Daniel 9:27 when He said,

**Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) . . . Matthew 24:15 (NASB)**

Here Jesus refers to the abomination of desolation in Daniel.

So, the prophet Daniel, Christ and Paul all tell us the antichrist will declare he is god.

Then Satan will drive him to stop the temple sacrifices and feasts. We are not told in this verse what sacrifices and feasts he will stop, but Daniel 7:25

implies he will change the times and laws of the Mosaic feasts and sacrifices. He will do so because he is a “no-law” man. He will do this because he will be opposed to Christ, the Good Shepherd and against the worship of God. We will learn more about this in our next study.

Revelation 13:7-8 tells us that he will make war with Christians because they will not worship him.

**All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. Revelation 13:8 (NASB)**

Revelation 13:11-18 also reveals the antichrist will have a religious leader called the false prophet (Revelation 19:20). He will be demon possessed according to Revelation 16:13. This false prophet will be part of the antichrist’s religion. He will be the religious leader. That is why some people think he could be a Muslim. Islam has both a civil leader and a religious leader. But Scripture does not tell us that. To make a dogmatic statement to that effect is just speculation.

I am thankful the rapture will occur first and as a Christian I will not be here to see this and experience the horrors that will follow. This helps us to identify the antichrist. He wants to be God just like Satan who wanted to replace God (Isaiah 14:12-14).

He wants everyone’s worship.

**6) ANTI-CHRIST WILL RULE AS IF HE WERE CHRIST.**

The sixth external behavior of the antichrist is found in several passages. The first passage is Daniel 11:38-39. This passage says,



**But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures. He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price. Daniel 11:38-39 (NASB)**

The “he” is the antichrist. We are told that he will have great military power. The foreign god is Satan. This means Satan will be the hidden power behind the antichrist. The rest of verse 39 reveals that the antichrist will want everyone’s submission.

Now notice what we are told about the antichrist in Revelation 13:5-8.

There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. Revelation 13:5-7 (NASB)

Here we are told that God will give two things to the antichrist. First, he will be allowed to speak arrogant words, blaspheme and have complete authority for the last half of the tribulation. Arrogant words and blasphemy reminds us of the last behavior. What is new is that he will have complete authority for forty-two months which equals 3.5 years. That is, he will have complete authority during the last half of the tribulation. Verse 8 we have already read. But, notice that the antichrist will exercise total authority worldwide, including making war against the saints, both Jewish and Gentile believers.

This also means there will be Christians in the tribulation. They will have embraced the faith during the tribulation. Both the Daniel and Revelation passages help us identify the antichrist. He loves power and total control. So, God will give it to him, and he will want to rule just as Christ will rule in the millennial kingdom.

**CONCLUSION.** Christians may be able to identify the antichrist before the rapture with what Scripture has revealed about him before the rapture. Anyone who becomes a Christian during the tribulation will clearly be able to identify him.

The antichrist will be the opposite of Christ. He will be against Christ. Initially, he will shepherd the nation of Israel, but he will not be the good shepherd. He will want the authority and sovereignty of God. He will want the worship that is due Christ. He will want to rule the world as Christ will during the millennial kingdom. Therefore, he will be a foolish and worthless shepherd for Israel. Israel will be deceived and follow him. He will be lawless and a destroyer of anyone who

opposes him. He will have the pride of Satan. I think the antichrist will be a politician from a major world power.

God has warned us about the antichrist and other “wannabe” antichrists in both the Old and New Testaments. In 1 John 2:18, the apostle John wrote,

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. 1 John 2:18 (NASB)

Clearly, the apostle John believed in a man who will be the future antichrist. Then he added that there are others called little antichrists. Today there are little antichrists everywhere and there seemingly are more of them every day. They want authority, power, and the worship of the world.

1 John 4:1-3 helps us understand that there is a spirit of the antichrist already among us, even in our churches. He said this,

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 1 John 4:3 (NASB)

I believe we are seeing Satan preparing the world for the antichrist. We see leaders around the world exhibiting the same characteristics already. Many leaders already exhibit the six characteristics. They are lawless, destroyers of people and businesses, deceivers, oppose God, and exalt themselves as if they were God, and want to rule as if they were Christ. When I say they “want to rule as if they were Christ,” I mean some leaders are foolish and worthless, just like the antichrist. They destroy their own people and their own nation. The characteristics of the antichrist are becoming increasingly more visible. The seeds are being planted so that the world will accept the real antichrist.

In 2 John 7, the apostle repeated his statement in 1 John 4:1-3. He said,

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 2 John 7 (NASB)

We must not forget that there is only one true Shepherd. He is Jesus Christ. He is wise, precious, sinless, godly, a protector, and God. He will return again someday and rule the world in righteousness, peace, and joy (Romans 14:17). Amen!