

The Anti-Christ/Man of Lawlessness

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, **2**not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.

There were reports going around that Christ's second coming had happened and that the believers had missed it. YOU WILL NOT MISS IT! All the angels will be with Jesus (Matthew 25:31); there will be a loud trumpet call of God and the dead will rise (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Don't worry; you won't miss it!

3Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness [also known as the Anti-Christ] is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. **4**He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

The Anti-Christ will be a man from within the church ("sets himself up in God's temple"). But he won't be happy simply to be around people worshipping God. The Anti-Christ will "exalt himself over everything that is called God". The Anti-Christ will exalt himself to the same level as God and wants to be worshipped as God. When the Pope speaks ex cathedra, he is said to be speaking on the same level as Christ or as Christ's substitute. The Pope's declarations are told to be placed in the same homage as the Bible even if his words are clearly contrary to the Bible, which has often happened. And it continues to happen to this day.

The current pope, Pope Benedict XVI, reaffirmed an old Catholic doctrine noted within the Council of Trent when he recently declared that faith in Jesus alone will not save you. You must also have good works. This dangerous false teaching is completely contrary to Ephesians 2:8-9. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Already the office of the papacy has made up teachings not in the Bible (prayer to Mary, prayer to saints, purgatory, indulgences, etc). Those teachings are leading people away from the truth of God's Word.

5Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? **6**And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. **7**For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.

Paul tells us that "the secret power of lawlessness is already at work." The power behind the Anti-Christ had already started when 2 Thessalonians was penned. This shows that the current pope and the popes before him were the anti-Christ—someone who says things that are contrary to God's Word i.e. prayer to Mary, prayer to saints, purgatory, work righteousness.)

8And then the lawless one [the Anti-Christ] will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. **9**The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, **10**and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. **11**For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie **12**and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

The reassuring aspect about the Biblical warning of the Anti-Christ is that Jesus will overthrow the Anti-Christ when Christ comes in his glory and splendor on the Day of Judgment. For us who are connected solely to Christ and his Holy Word, we will be saved by Christ's forgiveness won freely and fully for us on the cross!

881 The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock.[400] "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head." [401] This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.

5. According to the catechism, what is the basis of the pope's authority and how far does it go back?

Luther's Catechism: The use of the keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church (to every Christian: see 1 Peter 2:9 & why is this passage striking?) on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

6. How does the Catholic definition of the keys differ from what you learned in confirmation class?

889 In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility By a "supernatural sense of faith" the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, "unfailingly adheres to this faith." [417]

7. What does the Catholic Church teach that Christ gave to the church?

891 "The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful - who confirms his brethren in the faith he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals... The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium," above all in an Ecumenical Council. [418] When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed," [419] and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith." [420] This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself. [421]

8. According to Catholic belief, when is the pope infallible?

9. What does it mean that "this infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself?"

IN LIGHT OF THESE CLAIMS, HOW WOULD THE BIBLE HAVE US VIEW THE POPE?

For a Biblical view of the Pope, consider a portion from the Lutheran Confessions:

It is manifest that the Roman pontiffs and their adherents defend godless doctrines and godless forms of worship, and it is plain that the marks of the Antichrist coincide with those of the pope's kingdom and his followers... The doctrine of the pope conflicts in many ways with the Gospel, and the pope arrogates to himself a threefold divine authority. First, because he assumes for himself the right to change the doctrine of Christ and the worship instituted by God, and he wishes to have his own doctrine and worship observed as divine. Second, because he assumes for himself not only the power to loose and bind in this life but also the jurisdiction over souls after this life. Third, because the pope is unwilling to be judged by the church or by anybody, and he exalts his authority above the decisions of councils and the whole church. Such unwillingness to be judged by the church or by anybody is to make himself out to be God. Finally, he defends such horrible errors and such impiety with the greatest cruelty and puts to death those who dissent. Since this is the situation, all Christians ought to beware of becoming participants in the

THE CHRISTIAN'S VIEW OF THE POPE

Introduction: What are we to think about all the attention that's been given to the pope this last week? What thoughts have you heard from others whether from the media or coworkers and friends?

HOW WOULD POPE JOHN PAUL II HAVE WANTED US TO VIEW HIM?

Consider the Catholic Catechism...

882 The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful." [402] "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered." [403]

1. According to the catechism, how extensive is the authority of the pope?

883 "The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head." As such, this college has "supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff." [404]

2. What is the relationship between the bishops and the pope?

1369 The whole Church is united with the offering and intercession of Christ. Since he has the ministry of Peter in the Church, the Pope is associated with every celebration of the Eucharist (Communion), wherein he (the Pope) is named as the sign and servant of the unity of the universal Church. The bishop of the place is always responsible for the Eucharist, even when a priest presides; the bishop's name is mentioned to signify his presidency over the particular Church... Let only that Eucharist be regarded as legitimate, which is celebrated under [the presidency of] the bishop or him to whom he has entrusted it. [189]
Through the ministry of priests the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is completed in union with the sacrifice of Christ the only Mediator, which in the Eucharist is offered through the priests' hands in the name of the whole Church in an unbloody and sacramental manner until the Lord himself comes. [190]

3. What authority does this paragraph give to the pope? Why is that significant?

837 Fully incorporated into the society of the Church are those who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept all the means of salvation given to the Church together with her entire organization, and who - by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion - are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however persevere in charity is not saved. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but 'in body' not 'in heart.' [321]

4. According to this paragraph, what makes a person a member of the church? What qualification does the catechism mention?

impious doctrines, blasphemies, and unjust cruelties of the pope. They ought rather to abandon and execrate the pope and his adherents as the kingdom of the Antichrist (**Smalcald Articles: 4, 39-41**).

Scripture References	Teachings of the Antichrist	Teachings of the Papacy
“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is <u>coming</u> , even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18). ¹	There is one great Antichrist who will come just after the time of the apostles.	“The Pope, Bishop of Rome and <u>Peter's successor</u> , "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful” (CCCChurch 882).
“He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he <u>sets himself up in God's temple</u> , proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4).	The Antichrist will oppose and exalt himself over God by placing himself as the sole authority among God's people.	“For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as <u>Vicar [Substitute] of Christ</u> , and as <u>pastor of the entire Church</u> has <u>full, supreme, and universal power over the Church</u> , a power which he can always <u>exercise unhindered</u> ” (CCC 882).
“For the secret power of lawlessness is <u>already at work</u> ; but <u>the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he (the Word through Paul) is taken out of the way</u> ” (2 Thessalonians 2:7).	The Antichrist is more than just a person because his work was beginning in Apostolic times. His power will be held back for a time until the <u>Word of Christ is widely forsaken</u> (The Apostasy).	“When the Church through its supreme Magisterium [the body of bishops and Peter's successor] <u>proposes a doctrine 'for belief as being divinely revealed,' and as the teaching of Christ</u> , the definitions ‘ <u>must be adhered to with the obedience of faith</u> ’” (CCC 891). ²
“...the lawless one will be <u>revealed</u> , whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroyed by the splendor of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8).	<u>The Antichrist will be revealed</u> . He will be <u>overthrown by the Word of Christ</u> . He finally will be destroyed by Jesus' second coming.	“ <u>Antichrist will overthrow the Pope and usurp his See</u> ” ³ (Catholic Encyclopedia; “Antichrist”).
“the coming of the lawless one will be in... <u>all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders</u> ” (2 Thessalonians 2:9).	The Antichrist will appear to do similar things Christ did and claim what Christ alone can. Thus, It will appear that he has God's support.	“...For every human creature <u>it is necessary for salvation to be subject to the authority of the Roman pontiff</u> ” (CE; “Unam Sanctum”). ⁴

¹ 2 John 7 – “Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.” Though John says, “any such person is... the antichrist” in 1 John 2:18 he acknowledges that there is one who goes beyond ordinary antichrists.

² Throughout the centuries the papacy has established teachings contrary to the Scriptures which have led multitudes of people to forsake the Word of Christ. The worst of these teachings are “purgatory, penance, treasury of merits, mediating priesthood, indulgences, asceticism, the ban, and the condemnation of justification by faith alone” (Kuske 95). **The doctrine of Justification by faith alone** is the Gospel and the heart of Christianity, but it is condemned by the papacy in the Council of Trent, Session VI, Canon 11: “**If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema [damned].**”

³ Abbot Joachim (Catholic) proposed this doctrine, although it is denied by most Catholics. All the reformers professed this

BEWARE OF POPULAR OPINIONS!

The chart on this page compares the correct understanding of Revelation with some very popular and misleading opinions. The way you understand Revelation makes a significant difference, as the third column clearly explains.

Popular Opinions

True Teaching

The Difference It Makes for You

Millennialism

Millennium means 1,000. *Millennialism* thus teaches that the Messiah will return to crush His enemies and establish a 1,000-year earthly kingdom. Frustrated with their domination by the Romans, even before Jesus was born, ancient Jews invented the false teaching of Millennialism. Today, in some form, most Baptists, Pentecostals, and Adventists teach that Jesus will return to destroy His enemies, set up an earthly kingdom, and rule for 1,000 years.

The 1,000 years mentioned in Rev. 20:2 are not literal, but are a symbol which illustrates the New Testament era from the time of Christ up to Armageddon, just before the End. We see this in poetry and prophecies of the Old Testament where 1,000 symbolizes any great amount or long period of time (Ps. 50:10; 84:10; 90:4). Jesus does not need to return to set up an earthly kingdom since He has already established His kingdom among all believers (Matt. 12:28; Jn. 18:36; Rom. 14:17; Rev. 1:5-6).

In believing the heresy that Jesus has yet to establish His kingdom, you deny Jesus' preaching: "the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15); and you remove yourself from the promise that, in Jesus, God has already "delivered [you] from the domain of darkness, and transferred [you] to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom [you] have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). Reject the heresy that Jesus is yet to establish His kingdom. Instead, live daily in Christ's kingdom and be totally assured of God's complete forgiveness and His total protection from all evil powers (Rom. 8:37-39).

The Rapture

*Rapture*¹ means "to raise up." Many U.S. Protestants believe, teach and spread to other countries the heretical idea that God will rapture or raise up Christians and thus remove them from the final tribulation described in Revelation. Some also teach that the Rapture will give people a second chance to repent before Jesus returns a second time.

Revelation does not teach a Rapture of Christians. God will not remove Christians from the earth so that they might avoid suffering. Instead, Revelation teaches that God will preserve His people in the face of persecution and suffering (Rev. 3:10; 14:12).

Since Christ will resurrect all believers and unbelievers on Judgment Day, there will be no second chance for repentance (Rev. 11:18; 20:11-15. See pages 24-25).

God's Word does not teach the Rapture. Nowhere does our heavenly Father say He will remove anyone from the tribulation spoken of in Revelation; however, as the End Times occur, your gracious heavenly Father promises to give you all the strength needed to face even the most difficult suffering. "If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:31-32).

The Seven-Year Tribulation

Tribulation means “suffering.” Revelation 7:14 warns that God’s people will face “great tribulation” before Christ returns. Some interpreters argue that this great tribulation has not yet started. They teach that the tribulation is a future event that will last only seven years.

The book of Revelation teaches the great tribulation neither as a future event nor as a seven-year period. Instead, the great tribulation refers to the persecution and suffering God’s people have, and always will, face in this corrupt world (Acts 14:22; Rev. 1:9).

So long as you live on this earth, the devil will continually strive to deceive and destroy you (1 Pet. 5:8). But Christ has defeated the devil! Through you may face suffering, be fully assured that God will help you through your most difficult times and, when Jesus returns, He will “wipe every tear from [your] eyes,” and take you to be with Him in Paradise, forever! (Rev. 7:17. See pages 22–23).

The 144,000 of Israel

Based on a misunderstanding of Rev. 7:4–8, some Christians assert that a special group of 144,000² Jews will convert to Christianity at the End of Time. They believe that God will seal these Jews by granting them special protection during the tribulation described in Revelation.

The 144,000 sons of Israel are not Jews, but all Christians on earth who are baptized and thus sealed by God. This teaching of Revelation harmonizes with St. Paul who refers to all believers and the Christian church as the “new Israel” (see Gal. 6:15–16; “Israel of God” means all who trust in Christ, not just Jews; also Rom. 9:6–8; 11:25–26; Gal. 3:29).

If you have been baptized (i.e., sealed by the Spirit of God) and trust that the Lord forgives your sins, then you are one of God’s chosen people (Acts 2:38–39; 2 Cor. 1:22). You are a part of that symbolic 144,000 “sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel” (Rev. 7:4). That means God will preserve you in the days of tribulation that lie ahead and will finally take you to heaven.

Armageddon

Armageddon is Hebrew for Mt. Megiddo. Based on a misunderstanding of Rev. 16:16, some teach that Armageddon refers to a war that will start in the Middle East and will cause the end of the world. These false prophets use Middle Eastern military and political events, especially those dealing with the modern nation of Israel, to explain Revelation and predict the end of the world.³

Armageddon refers to the last great warfare that the devil will wage against the church of Christ on earth in one last attempt to destroy it. Though causing much suffering for the church, God will destroy the evil hosts arrayed against His saints on earth. And then the end of the world will come (Rev. 9:13–14; 16:12–16; 20:7–10; cf. Ezek. 38–39; Mk. 13:14–27).

You cannot prepare for the end of the world by observing world events and using them to interpret the Bible (Matt. 24:4–6). Instead, regularly read Revelation and keep in mind the important Gospel message of this final book of the Bible: that God will give you all the strength you need to overcome all difficulties of this life; and that your heavenly Father will prepare you for that day when Jesus will return to wipe away all tears and make all things new! (Rev. 21:1–7).

NOTES: ¹The *Rapture* is a non-biblical doctrine popularized by J. N. Darby (1800–1882). He was a pastor in the Church of Ireland but resigned when he became convinced of the Rapture doctrine. Darby helped found the “Plymouth Brethren.”

²The number 144,000 is symbolic. Twelve and multiples of twelve symbolize God’s people in Revelation (e.g., the Church—as the “New Jerusalem”—has 12 gates, measures 12,000 stadia across, and has walls 144 cubits high; Rev. 21:2, 10–17).

³Popular interpreters like Hal Lindsey, author of *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, now printed in 31 foreign language editions and read in more than 50 countries, focus Bible interpretation on Middle Eastern politics. Followers of this opinion often read their newspapers looking for new clues for interpreting the Bible. The result has been wild speculation and numerous false prophecies about the end of the world.