

“Antichrists” in the letters of John

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1 John 2:18 “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.”

1 John 2:22 “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.”

1 John 4:2-3 “By this you know the Spirit of God; Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”

2 John 7 “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”



The term "Antichrist" appears in the Bible only in two of John's letters. It is noteworthy that by the time of John's writing (A. D. 90-100), Christians had coined a specific term, "the antichrist," to designate the expected appearance of "false Christs and false prophets." Presumably such a term was yet unknown few decades earlier, since the Apostle Paul uses other designations: "the man of lawlessness," "the son of perdition" (2 Thess 2:3).

Linguistically, the term "antichrist" can denote a "substitute" or an "opponent" of Christ since the Greek preposition "anti" can mean either "in the place of" or "against." In John the term is used primarily in the latter sense. The "antichrist" is not a messianic pretender but one who opposes Christ by denying His incarnation and messiahship. "Who is the liar," writes John, "but he who

denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). "Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist" (1 John 4:2-3). The genuine incarnation of Christ was denied in John's time by Gnostic sects. In their view matter was altogether evil, and consequently they taught that Christ could never have assumed human flesh. His body was not genuinely human but only had a human appearance.

In John's view this teaching was a deadly heresy because it undermined the validity of Christ's atonement. Thus he identifies the propagators of this heresy with "the antichrist": "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist" (2 John 7).

In this passage "the antichrist" is singular and specific (preceded by the article - *ho antichristos*), but it is used to describe not one specific false teacher, but the "many deceivers" who were misleading the believers. In fact, in 1 John 2:18 the plural form is used ("Now many *antichrists* have come") to describe these false teachers. This indicates that John sees the antichrist as a principle of hostility and opposition to God, manifested especially by those who denied the incarnation of Christ. This principle is designated by John as "the spirit of antichrist" (1 John 4:3).

Islam as “an Antichrist”

John's definition of the Antichrist fits perfectly Islam's denial of the divinity, incarnation, and crucifixion of Christ. The Koran teaches that Jesus, called Isa, was simply a human being, born to a virgin

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called Mariam, who was the sister of Aaron and Moses (Surah 19:28) While still a virgin (Surah 6:12; 19:19-21), Mariam gave birth to 'Isa alone in a desolate place under a date palm tree (Surah19:22ff). Christ was not killed or crucified, and those who said he was crucified lied (Surah 4:157). "Isa [Jesus] did not die, but ascended to Allah." (Surah 4:158). Muhammad adopted these teachings from gnostic and Arian sects that had been exiled to Saudi Arabia. In other words, the very teaching condemned by John as "the Spirit of the Antichrists," eventually influenced Muhammed to adopt a unitarian view of God and a strict human view of Christ that discredited His divine nature and redemptive mission.

The Papacy as “The Antichrist”

The term "Antichrist" can also be applied to the Papacy, not in the sense of John's definition of the denial of the incarnation, but in the meaning of "taking the place of Christ." This is a legitimate use of the term which fits the historical claims of the Pope to be the Vicar of Christ and God's representative on earth. Excerpt from “Islam and the Papacy in Prophecy” by S Bacchiocchi. p20, Endtime Issues No. 86 6 July 2002

The apostle John was so determined to discredit the Gnostic heresy that when he wrote his gospel about the same time that he wrote his letters the first doctrine he emphasised was the incarnation, the truth that the eternal son of God became real flesh and blood.

John 1:1-3 “ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

John 1:10 “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”

John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The Gnostic deniers of the incarnation are the antichrists mentioned by John in his epistles. However they are different from the power that is commonly thought of as the 666 antichrist. That power is the known as the sea beast in Revelation 13, the ‘man of sin’ in 2 Thess 2, and the ‘little horn’ in Daniel ch7. This 666 Antichrist is shown in bible prophecy to be a european church state that succeeded the break up of the Imperial Roman Empire.