

“Should I Worry About the End Times?” Study Guide

Lesson 7: Who Is the Anti-Christ?

Outline

1. Limited Info

- a. Only three passages in the New Testament use the phrase.
- b. The first question is whether the term refers to one specific person or a type of person.
- c. 1 John 2:18-23
 - i. Both singular and plural use of term means it may not be one specific person.
 - ii. Anti-Christ is both currently present in the first century and would continue into the future.
 - iii. The anti-christs (“they”) originated within the church.
 - iv. The church knew who “they” were.
 - v. The antichrist was literally someone who denied the Son or some essential truth about the Son.
 - vi. The doctrine of the antichrists was a doctrine about Jesus himself.
- d. 1 John 4:1-3
 - i. The “spirit of antichrist” did not confess Jesus is from God.
 - ii. The “spirit of antichrist” was in the world already in the first century.
- e. 2 John 7-11
 - i. The antichrists (“such a one”) were those who did not confess that Jesus was the Christ come in the flesh.
 - ii. The antichrists had already gone out into the world from the church.
 - iii. The antichrists were from the church, but they no longer were within the church.
 - iv. The church was not supposed to partner with the antichrists.

2. Other Passages of Interest

- a. Matthew 24:24-26
 - i. Some would claim to be Christ and attempt to deceive people.
 - ii. If you know that Jesus is Christ, you are not fooled by another claiming to be Christ.
- b. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
 - i. There was concern in the church at Thessalonica that either the second coming of Christ was imminent or possibly had already occurred (compare 2 Timothy 2:16-18).
 - ii. First, note that the phrase “comes first” does not necessarily mean that one event would happen immediately before the other.
 - iii. All we know is that one event would happen first.
 - iv. “the rebellion” or literally “apostasy” (falling away)
 - v. “the man of lawlessness is revealed”

1. "the son of destruction"
 2. "who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship"
 3. "takes his seat in the temple of God"
 4. "proclaiming himself to be God"
 5. Questions
 - a. Would this happen near in time to Paul's writing?
 - b. How long after "the falling away" would the end come?
 - c. Is the "temple" literal or figurative?
 - vi. Someone was restraining this man at the time of Paul's writing.
 - vii. These events were "already at work" in the first century.
 - viii. The second coming of Jesus would "kill" the "lawless one."
 - ix. Christ would win, and the Lawless One would lose.
 - x. The Lawless One is not Satan, but he acts by Satan's influence.
 - xi. Like Satan, he is a deceiver. God would allow the deception and thereby distinguish between who loved the truth and who did not.
 - c. Can We Understand?
 - i. The general point of this text is clear.
 - ii. The end was "not yet." Things would get bad before they got better. Jesus wins in the end, so love the truth of God!
 - d. Interpretive Options
 - i. IRENAEUS: A Jewish "false Christ" in the first century
 - ii. TERTULLIAN: Fall of the Roman Empire
 - iii. CALVIN: The Catholic church
 - iv. Other Favorites:
 1. Nero Caesar
 2. Napoleon
 3. Hitler
 4. Kissinger/Gorbachev
 5. Anyone You Don't Like
3. Conclusions
- a. So far, everyone who thought they could identify the antichrist and anticipate the second coming has been wrong.
 - b. We may have to be content to agree on the big point, not the specifics.

Discussion Questions

1. What is an antichrist? Is it likely a specific person or a type of person?
2. What is the big point of 2 Thessalonians 2? Can it be understood without knowing the specific reference?
3. What do you think of the fact that so many different people have been identified through the years as candidates to be "the antichrist"?