

# The Antichrist Chapter 1 THE PAPACY NOT THE ANTICHRIST

by A.W. Pink

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## Transcript

The Antichrist

Chapter 1 THE PAPACY NOT THE ANTICHRIST.

"I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, and the occasion on which they were uttered and the connection in which they are found, invest them with peculiar solemnity. The chapter opens by depicting the Savior healing the impotent man who lay by the pool of Bethesda. This occurred on the Sabbath day, and the enemies of Christ made it the occasion for a vicious attack upon Him: "Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day" (v. 16). In vindicating His performance of this miracle on the Sabbath, the Lord Jesus began by saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (v. 17). But this only served to intensify their enmity against Him, for we read, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (v. 18). In response, Christ then made a detailed declaration of His divine glories. In conclusion He appealed to the varied witnesses which bore testimony to His Deity:—the Father Himself (v. 32); John the Baptist (v. 33); His own works (v. 36); and the Scriptures (v. 39). Then He turned to those who were opposing Him and said, "And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (vv. 40, 42, 43). And this was immediately followed by this searching question—"How can ye believe which receive honor (glory) one of another, and seek not the honor (glory) that cometh from God only?" (v. 44). Here is the key to the solemn statement which begins this article. These Jews received glory from one another; they did not seek it from God, for they had not the love of God in them. Therefore it was that the One who had come to them in the Father's name, and who "received not glory from men" (v. 41) was rejected by them. And just as eve's rejection of the word of God's truth laid her open to accept the serpent's lie, so Israel's rejection of the true Messiah, has prepared them, morally, to receive the false Messiah, for he will come in his own name, doing his own pleasure, and will "receive glory from men." Thus will he thoroughly appeal to the corrupt heart of the natural man. The future appearing of this one who shall "come in his own name" was announced, then, by the Lord Himself. The Antichrist will be "received," not only by the Jews, but also by the whole world; received as their acknowledged Head and Ruler; and all the modern pleas for and movements to bring about a federation of

the churches and a union of Christendom, together with the present-day efforts to establish a League of Nations—a great United States of the World—are but preparing the way for just such a character as is portrayed both in the Old and New Testaments. There will be many remarkable correspondences between the true and the false Christ, but more numerous and more striking will be the contrasts between the Son of God and the Son of perdition. The Lord Jesus came down from Heaven, whereas the Antichrist shall ascent from the bottomless Pit (Rev. 11:7). The Lord Jesus came in His Father's name, emptied Himself of His glory, lived in absolute dependence upon God, and refused to receive honor from men; but the Man of Sin will come in his own name, embodying all the pride of the Devil, opposing and exalting himself not only against the true God, but against everything that bears His name, and his deepest craving will be to receive honor and homage from men. Now since this parallel, with its pointed contrasts, was drawn by our Lord Himself in John 5:43, how conclusive is the proof which it affords that the Antichrist will be a single individual being as surely as Christ was! In further proof of this 1 John 2:18 may be cited: "Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that Antichrist cometh, even now hath there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour" (R.V.). Here the Antichrist is plainly distinguished from the many who prepare his way. The verb "cometh" here is a remarkable one, for it is the very same that is used of the Lord Jesus Christ in reference to His first and second Advents. The Antichrist, therefore, is also "the coming one," or "he that cometh." This defines his relation to the world,—which has long been expecting some Conquering Hero—as "the Coming One" defines the relation of the Christ of God to His Churches, whose Divinely-inspired hope is the return of the Lord from Heaven. Nor does this by any means exhaust the proof that the coming Antichrist will be a single individual being. The expressions used by the apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2—"that Man of Sin," "The Son of Perdition," "he that opposeth and exalteth himself," "the Wicked One whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth," "he whose coming is after the working of Satan"—all these point as distinctly to a single individual as did the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament point to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, in accordance with these texts, and many others which might be quoted, we find that all the Christian writers of the first six centuries (that is all who make reference to the subject) regarded the Antichrist as a real person, a specific individual. We might fill many pages by giving extracts from their works, but three must suffice. The first is taken from a very ancient document, entitled "The Teaching of the Apostles," which probably dates back to the beginning of the second century: — "For in the last days the false prophets and the destroyers shall be multiplied, and the sheep shall be turned into wolves, and love shall be turned into hate. For when lawlessness increases, they shall hate and persecute and deliver up one another; and then shall appear the world-deceiver as Son of God, who shall do signs and wonders, and the earth shall be delivered into his hands, and he shall do lawless deeds such as have never yet been done since the beginning of the world. Then shall the race of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be offended and shall perish, but they who have endured in their faith shall be saved under the very curse itself." Our second quotation is taken from the writings of Cyril, who was Bishop of Jerusalem in the fourth century: "This aforementioned Antichrist comes when the times of the sovereignty of the Romans shall be fulfilled, and the concluding events of the world draw nigh. Ten kings of the Romans arise at the same time in different places, perhaps; but reigning at the same period. But after these, the antichrist is the eleventh, having, by his magic and evil skill, violently possessed himself of the Roman power. Three of those who have reigned before him, he will subdue; the other seven he will hold in subjection to himself. At first he assumes a character of gentleness (as if a wise and understanding person), pretending both to moderation and philanthropy; deceiving, both by lying miracles and prodigies which come from his magical deceptions, the Jews, as if he were the expected Messiah. Afterwards he will addict himself to every kind of evil, cruelty, and excess, so as to surpass all who have been unjust and impious before him; having a bloody and

relentless and pitiless mind, and full of wily devices against all, and especially against believers. But having dared such things three years and six months, he will be destroyed by the second glorious coming from heaven of the truly begotten Son of God, who is our Lord and Savior, Jesus the true Messiah; who, having destroyed Antichrist by the Spirit of His mouth, will deliver him to the fire Gehenna." Our last quotation is made from the writings of Gregory of Tours, who wrote at the end of the sixth century A.D.:—"Concerning the end of the world, I believe what I have learnt from those who have gone before me. Antichrist will assume circumcision, asserting himself to be the Christ. He will then place a statue to be worshipped in the Temple at Jerusalem, as we read that the Lord has said, 'Ye shall see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place.'" Our purpose in making these quotations is not because we regard the voice of antiquity as being in any degree authoritative: far from it; the only authority for us is "What saith the Scriptures?." Nor have we presented these views as curious relics of antiquity—though it is interesting to discover the thoughts which occupied some of the leading minds of past ages. No: our purpose has been simply to show that the early Christian writers uniformly held that the Antichrist would be a real person, a Jew, one who should both simulate and oppose the true Christ. Such continued to be the generally received doctrine until what is known as the Dark Ages were far advanced. It is not until we reach the fourteenth century (so far as the writer is aware) that we find the first marked deviation from the uniform belief of the early Christians. It was the Waldenses,—so remarkably sound in the faith on almost all point of doctrine—who, thoroughly worn out by centuries of the most relentless and merciless persecutions, published about the year 1350 a treatise designed to prove that the system of Popery was the Antichrist. It should however be said in honor of this people, whose memory is blessed, that in one of their earliest books entitled "The Noble Lesson," published about 1100 A.D., they taught that the Antichrist was an individual rather than a system. Following the new view espoused by the Waldenses it was not long before the Hussites, the Wycliffites and the Lollards—other companies of Christians who were fiercely persecuted by Rome—eagerly caught up the idea, and proclaimed that the Pope was the Man of Sin and the papacy the Beast. From them it was handed on to the leaders of the Reformation who soon made an earnest attempt to systematize this new scheme of eschatology. But rarely has there been a more forcible example of the tendency of men's belief to be molded by the events and signs of their own lifetime. In order to adapt the prophecies of the Antichrist to the Papal hierarchy, or the line of the Popes, they had to be so wrested that scarcely anything was left of their original meaning. "The coming Man of Sin had to be changed into a long succession of men. The time of his continuance, which God had stated with precision and clearness as forty-two months (Rev. 13:5), or three years and a half, being far too short for the line of Popes, had to be lengthened by an ingenious, but most unwarrantable, process of first resolving it into days, and then turning these days into years. "The fact that, in the 13th chapter of the Apocalypse, the first Beast or secular power, is supreme while the second Beast or ecclesiastical power is subordinate, had to be ignored; since such an arrangement is opposed to all the traditions of the Roman system. Also the circumstances that the second Beast is a prophet and not a priest, had to be kept in the background; for the Roman church exalts the priest, and has little care for the prophet. Then, again, the awful words pronouncing sentence of death upon every one who worshipped the Beast and his image, and receives his mark in his forehead or in his hand (Rev. 13), seemed—and no wonder—too terrible to be applied to every Roman Catholic, and, therefore, had to be explained away or suppressed" (G. H. Pember). Nevertheless, by common consent the Reformers applied the prophecies which treat of the character, career, and doom of the Antichrist, to Popery, and regarded those of his titles which referred to him as "that Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition," the "King of Babylon" and "the Beast," as only so many names for the head of the Roman hierarchy. But this view, which was upheld by most of the Puritans too, must be brought to the test of the one infallible standard of Truth which our gracious God has placed in our

hands. We must search the Scriptures to see whether these things be so or not. Now we shall hold no brief for the pope, nor have we anything good to say of that pernicious system of which he is the head. On the contrary, we have no hesitation in denouncing as rank blasphemy the blatant assumption of the pope as being the infallible vicar of Christ. Nor do we hesitate to declare that the Papacy has been marked, all through its long history, by impious arrogance, awful idolatry, and unspeakable cruelty. But, nevertheless, there are many scriptures which prevent us from believing that the Papacy and the Antichrist are identical. The Son of Perdition will eclipse any monstrosities that have sprung from the waves of the Tiber. The Bible plainly teaches us to look for a more terrible personage than any Hildebrand or Leo. Undoubtedly there are many points of analogy between Antichrist and the popes, and without doubt the Papal system has foreshadowed to a remarkable degree the character and career of the coming Man of Sin. Some of the parallelisms between them were pointed out by us in the previous chapter, and to these many more might be added. Not only is it evident that Roman Catholicism is a most striking type and harbinger of that one yet to come, but the cause of truth requires us to affirm that the Papacy is an antichrist, doubtless, the most devilish of them all. Yet, we say again, that Romanism is not the Antichrist. As it is likely that many of our readers have been educated in the belief that the pope and the Antichrist are identical, we shall proceed to produce some of the numerous proofs which go to show that such is not the case. That the Papacy cannot possibly be the Antichrist appears from the following considerations: — 1. The term "Antichrist" whether employed in the singular or the plural, denotes a person or persons, and never a system. We may speak correctly of an anti-Christian system, just as we may refer to a Christian organization; but it is just as inadmissible and erroneous to refer to any system or organization as "the Antichrist" or "an antichrist," as it would be to denominate any Christian system or organization "the Christ," or "a Christ." Just as truly as the Christ is the title of a single person the Son of God, so the Antichrist will be a single person, the son of Satan. 2. The Antichrist will be a lineal descendant of Abraham, a Jew. We shall not stop to submit the proof for this, as that will be given in our next chapter; suffice it now to say that none but a full-blooded Jew could ever expect to palm himself off on the Jewish people as their long-expected Messiah. Here is an argument that has never been met by those who believe that the pope is the Man of Sin. So far as we are aware no Israelite has ever occupied the Papal See—certainly none has done so since the seventh century. 3. In line with the last argument, we read in Zechariah 11:16,17, "For, lo, I will raise up a Shepherd in the land which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young ones, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the Idol Shepherd that leaveth the flock! The sword (of Divine judgment) shall be upon his arm (his power), and upon his right eye (intelligence): his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." "The land" here is, of course, Palestine, as is ever the case in Scripture with this expression. This could not possibly apply to the line of the Popes. 4. In 2 Thessalonians 2:4 we learn that the Man of Sin shall sit "in the Temple of God," and St. Peter's at Rome cannot possibly be called that. The "Temple" in which the Antichrist shall sit will be the rebuilt temple of the Jews, and that will be located not in Italy but in Jerusalem. In later chapters it will be shown that the Mosque of Omar shall yet be replaced by a Jewish Temple before our Lord returns to earth. 5. The Antichrist will be received by the Jews. This is clear from the passage which heads the first paragraph of this chapter. "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive;" but the Jews have never yet owned allegiance to any pope. 6. The Antichrist will make a Covenant with the Jews. In Daniel 9:27 we read, "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for a week." The one referred to here as making this seven-year Covenant is "the Prince that shall come" of the previous verse, namely, the Antichrist, who will be the Head of the ten-kingdomed Empire. The nation with whom the Prince will make this covenant is the people of Daniel, as is clear from

the context—see Daniel 5:24. But we know of no record upon the scroll of history of any pope having ever made a seven-year Covenant with the Jews! 7. In Daniel 11:45 we read, "And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas, in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." The person referred to here is, again, the Antichrist, as will be seen by going back to Daniel 5:36 where this section of the chapter begins. There we are told, "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined shall be done." This is more than sufficient to identify with certainty the one spoken of in the last verse of Daniel 11. The Antichrist, then, will plant the tabernacles of his palace "between the seas," that is, between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. By no species of ingenuity can this be made to apply to the pope, for his palace, the Vatican, is located in the capital city of Italy. 8. The Antichrist cannot be revealed until the mystic Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit have been removed from the earth. This is made clear by what we read in 2 Thessalonians 2. In verse three of that chapter the apostle refers to the revelation of the Man of Sin. In verse four he describes his awful impiety. In verse five he reminds the Thessalonians how that he had taught them these things by word of mouth when he was with them. And then, in verse six he declares "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time." And again he said, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He who now letteth (hindereth) will let until He be taken out of the way." There are two agencies, then, which are hindering, or preventing the manifestation of the Antichrist, until "his time" shall have come. The former agency is covered by the pronoun "what," the latter by the word "He." The former, we are satisfied, is the mystical Body of Christ; the latter being the Holy Spirit of God. At the Rapture both shall be "taken out of the way," and then shall the Man of Sin be revealed. If, then, the Antichrist cannot appear before the Rapture of the saints and the taking away of the Holy Spirit, then, here is proof positive that the Antichrist has not yet appeared. 9. Closely akin to the last argument is the fact that quite a number of definite scriptures place the appearing of the Antichrist at that season known as the End-Time. Daniel 7 and 8 make it plain that the Antichrist will run his career at the very end of this age (we do not say this "dispensation" for that will end at the Rapture), that is, during the great Tribulation, the time of "Jacob's trouble." Daniel 7:21-23 declares, "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." Daniel 8:19 places his course (see Daniel 8:23-25) at "the last end of the indignation," i.e. of God's wrath against Israel and the Gentiles. Daniel 9 shows that he will make his seven-years' Covenant with the Jews at the beginning of the last of the seventy "weeks" which is to bring in "the end" of Israel's sins and "finish the transgression" (9:24). If the time of the Antichrist's manifestation is yet future then it necessarily follows that Rome cannot be the Antichrist. 10. The Antichrist will deny both the Father and the Son: "He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). This scripture does not speak of virtual, but of actual and formal denial. But Rome has always maintained in her councils and creeds, her symbols of faith and worship, that there are three persons in the Godhead. Numerous and grievous have been her departures from the teaching of Holy Scripture, yet since the time of the Council of Trent (1563 A.D.) every Roman Catholic has had to confess "I believe in God the Father...and in the Lord Jesus Christ . . .and in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, which proceedeth from the Father and the Son." As a system Romanism is a go-between. The "priest" stands between the sinner and God; the 'confessional' between him and the throne of grace; 'penance' between him and godly sorrow; the 'mass' between him and Christ; and 'purgatory' between him and Heaven. The pope acknowledges both the Father and the Son: he confesses himself to be both the servant of God and His worshipper; he blesses the people not in his own name, but in that of the Holy Trinity. 11. The

Antichrist is described as the one "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:4). This is what the popes have never done. Not even Leo ventured to deify himself or supersede God. The popes have made many false and impious claims for themselves; nevertheless, their decrees have been sent forth as from the "vicegerent" of God, the "vicar" of Christ—thus acknowledging a Divine power above himself. 12. In Revelation 13:2,4 we read, "And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority...and they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast." By comparing these verses with Revelation 12:9 we learn that the Dragon is none other than Satan himself. Now by almost common consent this first beast of Revelation 13 is the Antichrist. If, then, Romanism be the Antichrist, where, we may ask, shall we turn to find anything answering to what we read of here in Revelation 13:4—"And they worshipped the dragon, which gave power unto the beast." 13. This same 13th chapter of Revelation informs us that the Antichrist (the first Beast) shall be aided by a second Beast who is denominated "the False Prophet" (Rev. 19:20). The False Prophet, we are told "exerciseth all the power of the First Beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the First Beast" (Rev. 13:12). If the First Beast be the Papacy, then who is the False Prophet who "causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship" her? 14. Again; we are told that this False Prophet shall say to them that dwell on the earth "that they should make an image to the Beast, which had the wound by a sword and did live" (Rev. 13:14). Further, we are told, "And he had power to give life unto the image of the Beast, that the image of the Beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the Beast should be killed" (Rev. 13:15). Where do we find anything in Popery which in anywise resembles this? 15. In Daniel 9:27 we are told that the Antichrist "shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." And again in Daniel 8:11 we read, "Yea, he magnified himself even against the Prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away." If Romanism is the Antichrist how can these scriptures be made to square with the oft repeated "Sacrifice of the Mass"? 16. The dominion of the Antichrist shall be world-wide. The coming Man of Sin will assert a supremacy which shall be unchallenged and universal. "And all the world wondered after the Beast" (Rev. 13:3). "And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Rev. 13:7). It hardly needs to be pointed out that half of Christendom, to say nothing of Heathendom, is outside the pale of Rome, and is antagonistic to the claims of the Papacy. Again; in Revelation 13:17 we read "No man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the Beast, or the number of his name:" and when, we ask, has any pope exercised such commercial supremacy that none could buy or sell without his permission? 17. The duration of Antichrist's career, after he comes out in his true character, will be limited to forty-two months. There are no less than six scriptures which, with a variety of expression, affirm this time restriction. In Daniel 7:25 we learn that this one who shall "think to change times and laws," will have these "given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time:" that is, for three years and a half—cf. Revelation 12:14 with 12:6. And again in Revelation 13:5 we are told, "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months" (Rev. 13:5). Now it is utterly impossible to make this harmonize with the protracted history of Romanism by any honest method of computation. 18. In Revelation 13:7,8 we read, "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the face of the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Here we are expressly told that the only ones who will not "worship the Beast," i.e. the Antichrist, are they whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. If then the pope is the Antichrist, all who do not worship him must have

their names written in the Lamb's book of life—an absurdity on the face of it, for this world be tantamount to saying that all the infidels, atheists, and unbelievers of the last thousand years who were outside of the pale of Roman Catholicism are saved. 19. In 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12 we are told, "For this cause God shall end them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." The context here shows that "believing a lie" means accepting the claims of the Antichrist. Those who believe his claims will "receive him (John 5:43), and not only so, they will "worship" him (Rev. 13:8); and 2 Thessalonians 2:12 declares that all who do this will be damned." If, then, the pope is the Antichrist, then it necessarily follows that all who have believed his lying claims, that all who have received him the vicar of Christ, that all who have worshipped him, will be eternally lost. But the writer would not for a moment make any such sweeping assertion. He, together with thousands of others, believes firmly that during the centuries there have been many Roman Catholics who, despite much ignorance and superstition, have been among that number that have exercised faith in the blood of Christ, and that lived and died resting on the finished work of Christ as the alone ground of their acceptance before God, and who because of this shall be forever with the Lord. 20. That the Antichrist and the Papacy are totally distinct is unequivocally established by the teaching of Revelation 17. Here we learn that there shall be ten kings who will reign "with the Beast" (v. 12), and act in concert with him (vv. 13,16). Then we are told "these shall hate the Whore (the papacy), and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (v. 16). Instead of the Antichrist and the Papacy being identical, the former shall destroy the latter; whereas, the Antichrist shall be destroyed by Christ Himself, see 2 Thessalonians 2:8. Perhaps a word of explanation is called for as to why we have entered into such lengthy details in presenting some of the many proofs that the Papacy is not the Antichrist. Our chief reason for doing so was because we expect that many who will read this paper are among the number who have been brought up in the belief which was commonly taught by the Reformers and which has prevailed generally since their day. For those readers who had already been established on this point, we would ask them to please bear with us for having sought to help those less fortunate. Our next chapter will be one of more general interest, for in it we shall discuss the person of the Antichrist—who he will be, from whence he will spring, and what marks will serve to identify him.

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