

Episode 16

Today In Bible Prophecy

Are We To Understand Literally The Things Written About The Final Antichrist? If So, What Lessons Do We Learn?

After looking at the career of the Final Antichrist in our last three episodes of “Today In Bible Prophecy” there are two further issues that need to be addressed.

Do We Interpret These Words Literally Or In Some Other Way?

First, are we to interpret the things that are written about this individual in a literal manner? In other words, should we look at these things as predictive prophecy that will actually come to pass in the future, or are there other ways that we should be looking at what the Scriptures say?

What Lessons Can We Learn If We Interpret The Coming Of Antichrist As Something Still To Occur?

If we are to understand the words literally, and that a Final Antichrist is still to come, then what lessons do we learn from a study of his career? In sum, are there truths that we would not otherwise know if we neglect to study this subject? These are two crucial issues to consider.

Issue 1: How Should The Career Of The Final Antichrist Be Interpreted?

One issue which must be dealt with our study of the biblical Antichrist concerns how we will look at what Scripture in general, and the Book of Revelation in particular, says about this subject. To do this we need a basic understanding of how Revelation has been interpreted.

Generally speaking, there are four basic ways in which the words contained in the Book of Revelation are interpreted by Bible-believing Christians. We deal with each of these possibilities in more detail in our book *The Final Antichrist* in Questions 5-9.

We can simply state them as follows.

1. The Preterist View

The word “preterist” is Latin for “past.” There are some Bible commentators who believe the events listed in the Book of Revelation have, for the most part, already been fulfilled. Therefore, a study of Antichrist is a study of past historical events, not future events.

They contend that while there are many lessons to be learned from the study of Antichrist, we should not look forward to a personal Antichrist who is still to come.

In other words, everything written about him has already been fulfilled in the distant past. The biblical Antichrist has already come. This is the preterist position. (We deal with this issue in our book *The Final Antichrist* in Question 5)

2. The Idealist View

Another way of looking at the events in Revelation is the idealist perspective. Contrary to the preterist view, which sees Revelation dealing with actual historical events that have taken place in the past, the idealist view does not interpret any of these things in a literal manner.

It is argued that the Book of Revelation idealizes the struggle between good and evil. It is a mistake according to the idealist view to interpret these passages literally.

What is written in Revelation illustrates timeless truths, nothing more.

Therefore, we should not expect a personal Antichrist to arrive on the scene at some time in the future. We deal with this issue in our book *The Final Antichrist* in Question 6.

3. The Historicist View

Some interpreters see the Book of Revelation as being continually fulfilled in history. This is known as the historicist interpretation. This includes the rise of Muhammad and Islam, the Protestant Reformation, etc.

Thus, historicists see a literal fulfillment of the predictions in the Book of Revelation as something that is constantly occurring. Accordingly, the predictions of the Antichrist have a present application in every generation throughout this age. We deal with this issue in our book *The Final Antichrist* in Question 7.

Furthermore, there have been many Protestant interpreters, who have held to this historicist view, who have believed that the predictions about the Antichrist have their ongoing fulfillment in the papacy. They point out the many similarities between the practices of the Roman Catholic Church and the biblical teaching about Antichrist. We deal with this issue in our book *The Final Antichrist* in Question 8.

4. The Futurist View

Finally there is the futurist view which sees the bulk of Revelation as describing events that are still to come. This includes references to the Antichrist. Those who hold this particular point of view believe that a personal Antichrist, also called the “beast” or “first beast,” will come on the scene of history immediately before the Second Coming of Christ.

Therefore, according to the futurist, Scripture speaks of a particular individual known as the man of sin, or Antichrist, who is still to come. We deal with this issue in our book *The Final Antichrist* in Question 9.

This gives a brief summation of the various ways in which the references to the beast, or Antichrist, as described in the Book of Revelation and elsewhere, are interpreted.

There Is Room For Differences Among Believers

As always, we want to make the point that there are good Bible-believing Christians who hold each of these views. Thus, there is room for disagreement among believers in Christ. Thus, these issues should never be a “test of fellowship” as to whom you do, or do not, associate with.

Having said this, as we have continually emphasized, we hold to the “Futurist View.” We believe that the events spoken about this personage will be literally fulfilled at some time in the future.

Issue 2: Lessons To Be Learned From Studying The Career Of The Final Antichrist

If indeed, the biblical testimony to the Final Antichrist is to be understood literally, and that the events recorded about him have not yet happened, then what lessons can we learn from a study of this topic?

While there are many, we will list ten. As always, there is a lot more that we could say about each of these.

Lesson 1: When The Lord Devotes A Large Section Of Scripture To A Topic, It Should Be Studied

As we mentioned previously, the study of the career of Final Antichrist is not a waste of time. As we have observed, this personage and his deeds are recorded in Holy Scripture, and they occupy a large part of it.

The fact that we have this huge amount of information, including many specific details, should make it obvious that the Lord wants us to study this subject.

If we neglect such a study, then what are we saying about the Lord and what He has revealed to us in Holy Scripture? Are we saying that it is irrelevant? By ignoring the subject are we inferring that we know more than Him about what is important for us to recognize and understand about how to live our Christian lives?

Do we feel that we, as finite human beings, can make the final decision as to what is important to know from God’s revealed Word, the Bible, and what is not?

The Scriptures Would Be Incomplete Without An Explanation Of His Career

Furthermore, there is something else that is not often mentioned. Indeed, the Scriptures would be incomplete if we did not have the information given to us about the coming of this final Antichrist.

In other words, there are many things that we would *not* know about the future if this personage and his career had not been revealed to us ahead of time. Consequently, we will examine some of these truths in our next nine “lessons to be learned.”

All in all, we will discover that there are at many valuable lessons that we can learn from this biblical study of the Final Antichrist.

Sadly, too many Christians tend to make one of two mistakes in this regard. Either they ignore completely the subject of the Antichrist, or they spend a great deal of their time studying it and hardly anything else.

Neither should be the case. The career of the Final Antichrist is part of God's revelation to us about what to expect in the future. While it is certainly not the only subject Christians should dwell upon, it is important to have some understanding of it.

However, for Bible believers, our main subject of study should always be Jesus Christ, not Antichrist.... Lest we forget.

Lesson 2: History Will Have An Endgame

One of the most important lessons that we learn from an overall study of this biblical character and his career is that history is moving in a direction, a direction that will lead to a completion. In other words, there will be an endgame for the human race and our planet. History will not continue endlessly as it has in the past.

One of the ways that we know this truth has been revealed to us by the Apostle John. While there are many antichrists that have come and gone on the scene of history, John made it clear that there will be a "final one." He wrote the following about this.

Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared (1 John 2:18 NLT).

Notice that he says that "the Antichrist," singular, is coming. The coming of this personage will mark the end of these false Christs, the false Messiahs, who come to the earth. Until he arrives, many false Christs will appear. History certainly tells us that his words have been shown to be true.

Yet, once this Final Antichrist appears it will signal the time of the end. He is also known as the unique name, "the beast." This particular nickname has been reserved for he and his cohort the false prophet. No other antichrist has been given this special designation. In other words, he is "one of a kind."

When he arrives, it is in the time frame when God's kingdom comes to the earth in the Person of the King, Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, a study of the person of the Final Antichrist and the events surrounding his life makes this clear.

To sum up, the human race will not continue forever and ever in the state that we are presently in. This world, as we know it, will come to an end.

We would not know this if we did not take the time to study this subject or to clearly interpret the many facts and details that the Scripture has to say about it. This includes the career of the Final Antichrist.

Lesson 3: There Is A Time Period That Has Yet To Take Place On The Earth “The Last Days”

There are also passages in Scripture that speak of an era known the “Last Days.” By definition, “last” means near the time of the end. Daniel wrote about this time period.

As I, Daniel, was trying to understand the meaning of this vision, someone who looked like a man stood in front of me. And I heard a human voice calling out from the Ulai River, “Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of his vision.” As Gabriel approached the place where I was standing, I became so terrified that I fell with my face to the ground. “Son of man,” he said, “you must understand that the events you have seen in your vision relate to the time of the end.” (Daniel 8:15-17 NLT).

As Daniel was seeking to understand a vision that was given to him, about certain events that would take place, he was specifically told that they are related to “the time of the end.”

Ezekiel, in writing about a future invasion of Israel, that has still not occurred, made it clear that this will only take place when the end is near. He recorded the Lord saying.

A long time from now you will be called into action. In the distant future you will swoop down on the land of Israel, which will be enjoying peace after recovering from war and after its people have returned from many lands to the mountains of Israel (Ezekiel 38:8 NLT).

Notice that twice in this verse it speaks of “a long time from now,” and “the distant future.” This is another indication of Scripture speaking of a time period known as the “last days.”

From the study of the entirety of Scripture, we know that this Final Antichrist appears on center-stage upon the earth during the “last days,” at a time shortly before Christ comes back to our planet. Indeed, as we will discover, his punishment comes when the Lord Jesus arrives a second time.

Again, the fact that there is a time of the end, and so much information is given to us about this particular time, is another valuable lesson that we should learn.

Furthermore, as we see the world stage being set up for these predicted events to happen, it gives us further confidence that Scripture has provided for us a basic roadmap of the time of the end. The Final Antichrist, and his career are a key factor for us to understand these truths. In point of fact, without it, there would be many things unknown to us concerning what will happen when the Lord returns.

Lesson 4: The Lord Himself Will Judge Our Planet “The Day Of The Lord”

Right now, we are living in what has variously been called, “Man’s Day” or “Human’s Day.” It is the time where the human race is allowed to live freely and act according to our fallen nature. However, there will be a future period of time where the Lord will judge the human race. Scripture calls this the “Day of the Lord.” Paul wrote:

Now on the topic of times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you have no need for anything to be written to you. For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come in the same way as a thief in the night. Now when they are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction comes

on them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will surely not escape (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 NET).

As we have emphasized, the punishments of this future time period will occur during the era of the appearance of this Final Antichrist. Without looking at what the Bible has to say about his coming of this “beast” and the issues associated with it, we would not understand precisely why the Lord has chosen this particular time to return. Indeed, the actions of “the beast” place our planet in such a chaotic state that the return of the Lord becomes necessary.

Lesson 5: There Will Be No Peace On Earth During This Time

As we saw in our overview of the career of the Final Antichrist, he will be proclaimed as a “man of peace.” He comes on the scene as a “rider on a white horse.”

I looked on when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a thunderous voice, “Come!” So I looked, and here came a white horse! The one who rode it had a bow, and he was given a crown, and as a conqueror he rode out to conquer (Revelation 6:1-2 NET).

It seems that he will bring some type of temporary peace to a war-torn world. In fact, as we saw in our previous lesson, 1 Thessalonians 5:3 tells us that when the unbelieving people of the world say, “peace and safety” then suddenly destruction will come upon them.

This tells us, among other things, that there will be no genuine “peace on earth” until the “Prince of Peace” returns.

Therefore, all the human attempts to make the entire world a peaceful place will result in failure. While it is certainly crucial that we humans try to make peace with one another, we must understand that “world peace” will never be achieved, try as we might, until the return of Christ.

Lesson 6: The People Of Earth, Who Have Rejected Christ, Will Be Deceived And Embrace This Final Antichrist

Another valuable lesson that we learn concerns the response of the human race to this “beast” when he arrives. In fact, this acceptance of the Final Antichrist, the first beast, will be a fulfillment of a specific prediction of Jesus. He said the following to the religious leaders of His day.

I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him (John 5:43 ESV)

Without the arrival of the Final Antichrist, and the acceptance of our world to his claims, we would not know how this particular prediction of Jesus would be ultimately fulfilled.

However, when we study the career of the Final Antichrist, it becomes clear.

The Master Of Deception

We discover from an examination of the career of this final Antichrist that he will deceive the people of the earth as to his true nature and his intentions. In fact, when Paul wrote about his coming, he emphasized the deception that will take place.

This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them. So God will cause them to be greatly deceived, and they will believe these lies. Then they will be condemned for enjoying evil rather than believing the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 NLT).

Note the emphasis on counterfeit signs that this man will perform, or are performed on his behalf, and the deception that comes with it. Because the people of earth are so willing to be deceived, God will cause them to be “greatly deceived.”

Paul wrote elsewhere about the deception that will be widespread at this particular time.

But evil people and impostors will flourish. They will deceive others and will themselves be deceived. (2 Timothy 3:13 NLT).

Deceive and “being deceived” says it all. Again, if we do not study the career of this coming “man of sin” we would never know about the deception that will come upon the world.

The Lawlessness Of Antichrist Is Already With Us

Furthermore, this “anti-Christ” mindset that this personage will proclaim is already here. If we do not study the Scripture which warns us about these things, then we too can be deceived also. Paul also wrote.

For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way. Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed, but the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by the splendor of his coming (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 NLT).

Notice that this lawlessness is already secretly working in our world. Unless we study the warnings of Scripture, including what the Bible says about this coming man of sin, his destructive career, as well as the reception that the unbelieving world gives to him, then we too can fall into the same trap of lawlessness as well as being misdirected in our goals and desires.

Lesson 7: Believers Will Be Able To Understand What Is Taking Place

This leads us into one of the most important lessons of all. The Bible makes specific promises that believers living at the time of the end will be able to understand the events taking place. In other words, the seeming chaos in the world will make sense to them.

In fact, while the unbelievers continue to have no clue as to what is taking place, believers who study the Scriptures will understand what is going on.

I heard, but I did not understand. So I said, “Sir, what will happen after these things?” He said, “Go, Daniel. For these matters are closed and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made clean, and refined, but the wicked will go on being wicked. None of the wicked will understand, though the wise will understand. (Daniel 12:8-10 NET).

This passage cannot be emphasized enough for those of us living at this time. Among other things, the world events that are setting the stage for the Final Antichrist will make sense.

Indeed, such things as digital currency, the exponential increase of technology, the rise of globalism, the lack of personal freedom, and the censorship of free speech are all signs that the world is preparing for the arrival of the Final Antichrist.

Among other things, these events give further evidence that the Bible is the divine revelation of the one, true God. Indeed, for only He, the One who knows the future, could predict all these things with such perfect accuracy.

Therefore, when one studies about the end times, and in particular the career of the Final Antichrist, and sees all these things taking place that the Scripture predicts, it confirms that we are not believing in fairy tales. This allows the believer to live with a confidence that unbelievers will never have. Such is one of the many important lessons we learn when we study this subject.

Lesson 8: Persecution Of Christians And Jews Will Continue Until The End

As we examine the Book of Revelation, the career of the Final Antichrist, and the works of the devil, we find that those who are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as those who have put their faith in the God of the Bible will be persecuted. When the final Antichrist comes on the scene there will be worldwide persecution to the point of death. Scripture says:

And the beast was allowed to wage war against God’s holy people and to conquer them. And he was given authority to rule over every tribe and people and language and nation (Revelation 13:7 NLT).

However, we must understand that this persecution will not merely begin when this personage arrives. In fact, it has already been occurring since the time of Christ and His apostles. Yet, in the “last days” it will happen in an unprecedented manner that has never been seen before. Indeed, it will be global.

As we approach this time, it is important for believers in Christ to understand that they should expect to see an uptick in this type of persecution like the Final Antichrist will eventually bring. In other words, as life does not get easier for a Bible-believing Christian, it is further confirmation that we are rapidly approaching the time of the end.

Lesson 9: The World Will Not Be Destroyed By Humans

All of these truths will teach us another valuable lesson. Our present world will not destroy itself through the use of nuclear weapons or through “climate change.” Jesus made the point that He will return before something like this could happen.

For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive. But it will be shortened for the sake of God's chosen ones (Matthew 24:21 NLT).

The great calamity or tribulation that will come upon the world will threaten our existence as humans, but the Lord will intervene before this becomes a reality.

Again, when we look at the career of this coming man of sin, we see how all of this fits in God's program for time and eternity.

In other words, we should not live in fear that everything and everyone will be destroyed. Unhappily, those who do not believe in the divine revelation of Scripture do not have this assurance.

Sadly, many live in constant fear simply because they are only looking at present-day events and not to the One who has explained what will eventually take place on our planet.

Lesson 10: The Lord Jesus Will Return To Earth, Destroy The Armies Of Antichrist And Throw Him Into The Lake Of Fire

The last thing we learn, as we examine the career of this Final Antichrist is he gathers the armies of the world to fight against Christ, and the armies of heaven, as the Lord returns to the earth.

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the world and their armies gathered together to fight against the one sitting on the horse and his army (Revelation 19:19 NLT).

As can be imagined, it is not much of a battle. Jesus Christ returns to the earth and tosses him and the false prophet into the lake of fire.

And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who did mighty miracles on behalf of the beast—miracles that deceived all who had accepted the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. Both the beast and his false prophet were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 19:20 NLT).

Again, if we did not have the divine revelation of the career of the coming Antichrist, then we would not know how Jesus Christ would return to the earth, where He would return and the reason for His return.

Since we do have this revelation, we know that He returns to earth on a white horse with the armies of heaven, He comes to the Land of Israel where He destroys the armies of those who have gathered against Him. If Scripture said nothing about the Antichrist, then we would know none of these things.

Summary To Our Ten Lessons

Here's what we have learned about the necessity of studying about this coming character, the Final Antichrist.

- Lesson 1: When The Lord Devotes A Large Section Of Scripture To A Topic, It Should Be Studied**
- Lesson 2: History Will Have An Endgame**
- Lesson 3: There Is A Time Period That Has Yet To Take Place On The Earth “The Last Days”**
- Lesson 4: The Lord Himself Will Judge Our Planet “The Day Of The Lord”**
- Lesson 5: There Will Be No Peace On Earth During This Time**
- Lesson 6: The People Of Earth, Who Have Rejected Christ, Will Be Deceived And Embrace This Final Antichrist**
- Lesson 7: Believers Will Be Able To Understand What Is Taking Place**
- Lesson 8: Persecution Of Christians And Jews Will Continue Until The End**
- Lesson 9: The World Will Not Be Destroyed By Humans**
- Lesson 10: The Lord Jesus Will Return To Earth, Destroy The Armies Of Antichrist And Throw Him Into The Lake Of Fire**

These ten lessons should make it clear that the study of all of Scripture, including that of the coming Antichrist, is of the utmost importance. Indeed, our knowledge of the future would be incomplete if the career of the Final Antichrist was never recorded in Scripture.

Fortunately, the Lord has taken the time to reveal these specific details to us.