

Series
Of
Five “Antichrist”
Articles

By

Stella Paterson

www.ekklesia4him.net

Index

- 1. Who Is Antichrist?**
- 2. The Antichrist "Bride"**
- 3. The Antichrist Shepherd**
- 4. The Antichrist Prophet**
- 5. The Antichrist *Christian***

Who Is Antichrist?

What a time to be alive! We see all around us signs and events coming to pass as foretold in the Bible. There are countless books, web sites and ministers, each proclaiming their own spin on what is transpiring or is about to transpire. If we were to take the time to absorb what each one says, our heads would be spinning and we would be no further ahead. Each one is so certain that he is correct in his understanding of "end-time prophecy." But which one is actually correct? Does any one have the "inside track" with God so that they can identify some mystery "person" in answer to the popular question "Who is the Antichrist?" Is "Antichrist" the "beast" of Revelation? Is he the "abomination of desolation" of which Daniel wrote and to which Jesus referred?

In this article, I will be sharing what the Lord has shown me. From the Bible, I will be exposing who antichrist is. This is something the Lord quickened to my spirit several years ago, but in my book I barely touched on it. The time has come to expand on this very important matter.

Lest I come across sounding like some kind of arrogant "know-it-all," I beg your indulgence. My prayer is that this article will minister to you more than any other that I have written - even my book, for those who have read it.

Now let's search the Scriptures together and see what the Lord has revealed to this point, using the basics to lay the foundation for understanding.

Why we are here

In Revelation 4:11, we read "*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and **for thy pleasure** they are and were created.*" These words in the last book of the Bible tell us the reason for Genesis, chapter one. All else must be examined in light of this one truth. Never mind everything else that has since transpired or exists in modern-day cultures. As Paul the Apostle said in Colossians 1:15-17, "[Jesus] *is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for **in him were all things created, in the heavens, and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things have been created through him, and unto him: and **he is before all things, and in him all things consist.*****" He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

In the Garden of Eden, man was created in the image of God, for His own purpose and pleasure, as we just read. We have in us a need for God because He created us for Himself. We have an inherent need to worship something or Someone, but what has man chosen to worship?

As we covered in another article, we know what happened in Adam's time. Because of the enemy's temptation, man came into the knowledge of good and evil - a curse which every person since that time has inherited at birth. It is the curse of death, as God warned

Adam and Eve when He forbade them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The simple matter is that man is born a creature of flesh, "dead" from birth, and the only answer is "Life" which comes through Jesus Christ. Let's look a little closer, and let the Word of God reveal the "thread" which leads to the understanding of who this "antichrist" is.

Definition of "antichrist"

The Greek word "christos" is translated "Christ" and means "anointed." Christos comes from another word, "chrio", which means "*to smear or rub with oil*" and is translated "anoint." The Greek word "anti" gives us the English prefix "anti" which with "christ" forms "antichrist." John 1:41 tells us that "Messiah" is translated "Christ" in the New Testament. Therefore, the resulting definition of "antichrist" is "*opponent of Messiah*" or, in other words, someone who opposes Messiah.

The Law and the Prophets foretold of Messiah's coming, and in great detail told us why and how. As we have said before, the Law was the tutor to point the Jews to Christ. Their sacrifices of blood to make atonement for sin, using specified animals, were meant to "tutor" them in anticipation of the one pure Lamb who would one day come, making a once-for-all sacrifice to put away sin.

In the study of the word "sin" we learned that the "sin" which Jesus "put away" was the "abstract" sin of flesh and self. It was not the sins (deeds) of any person. As Romans 8:3 tells us, He came "*in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin condemned* [Greek: 'judged'] *sin in the flesh.*" He paid the price for all mankind by taking the judgment for sin in His own flesh. **THAT IS THE REASON HE CAME** - He put to death the source of sin on behalf of all. Now the way was paved for every person to inherit Life by coming to Him and putting their trust in His atonement, receiving His Life in the person of the Holy Spirit.

But what has man done in response? Have ALL mankind come to Him? We know the answer is "No". Instead, man has opposed Messiah who came to free him from self and flesh.

The prophet Isaiah foretold this in Isaiah 53:3: "*He is despised and **rejected** of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*" And many centuries later, Paul wrote "*For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the **enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition**, whose God is the belly* [Greek: figuratively 'the heart', or could we say 'self and flesh'?], *and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.*" (Philippians 3:18-19) Those who are *enemies of the cross of Christ* without question "oppose Messiah". SELF is more important to them and, because of it and in spite of what they may profess, Jesus is rejected.

Who is antichrist?

Jesus the Messiah's beloved friend John wrote the Gospel of John, the epistles of First, Second and Third John, as well as the book of Revelation. He seemingly understood Jesus better than did any of the others, and his writings shed much light on the subject of "antichrist." The word "antichrist" can be found only in his epistles.

Let's take a closer look at John's words in 1 John 2.

*"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, **the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (verses 15-16) John is speaking of how "self," with the "lusts" and love of the things of this life, is not of God. Verse 17 says "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."*

John's very next words are *"Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that **antichrist** cometh, even now have there arisen **many antichrists**; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest how that they all are not of us. And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things". (verses 18-20)* John is showing the difference between flesh and Spirit. Those "not of" them had no Holy Spirit - they were flesh, never having been born anew and becoming a part of the fellowship of John's time. Yes, they may have even played the part but it was a lie. Do you know anyone like that; playing the part while merely being entrenched in churchianity?

Then John followed with this: *"I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because **no lie is of the truth**. Who is the liar but he that denieth [Greek; 'rejects'] that Jesus is the Christ? This is **antichrist**, even he that denieth [Greek: 'rejects'] the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth [rejects] the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth [Greek: 'acknowledges'] the Son hath the Father also." (verses 21-23)* How does one reject Jesus, as in the context of John's words? It is possible to "confess" Jesus as "Lord" while rejecting Him, or "opposing" Him, through refusal to surrender SELF to the crucifying power of the Cross. As John clearly states, "He is antichrist."

John mentions "antichrist" again in his second epistle, where he continues his message on "love" which is the main theme in all three epistles. He wrote, *"not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we **love one another**. And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is **the commandment**, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye **should walk in it. For many deceivers are gone forth into the***

world, even they that confess [Greek: 'acknowledge'] not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." (2 John 5b-7)

Would John suddenly change the subject in a paragraph about the commandment to "love," and begin speaking of some world leader who would come two thousand years later? No! It is obvious there is a correlation in his message on love and the identity of "antichrist" with the character traits he would demonstrate.

In his First, Second and Third epistles, John speaks more about love than does any other book in the New Testament. A close second is his "Gospel of John." We know that God is Love and, when we receive His Son who is also Love, His Life replaces "self" in one who is born from above. In view of this, I believe we could say that the opposite of "self" is "Love". Love is the evidence in one who is born anew, as Jesus revealed when He said His disciples would be known by the love they have one for another. (John 13:35) Common sense would tell us that those NOT born anew by God's Spirit remain dead in flesh and self, and they are opposing Messiah because they have rejected Him.

Are you beginning to get the picture? It is so much easier and less disturbing to us if we look outside of SELF when attempting to identify "the Antichrist." Self and flesh have always been the greatest opponent of Messiah because flesh is precisely what He came to free us from. Again, let me say that self and flesh came with the knowledge of good and evil and, ultimately, separation from God. Jesus brought reconciliation by putting to death flesh in Himself. Why else would Jesus cry, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46) The moment had come when Jesus, in the likeness of sinful flesh, experienced the same separation from the Father. This should tell us how utterly sinful flesh is! Think back to Noah's day when God regretted making man because he was nothing but evil flesh, with the exception of Noah's household.

Let's take this thought a little further. Whether "fallen ministers" who through the lusts of the flesh fall into immorality; false ministers who preach from the store of SELF and flesh rather than walk by the Spirit, or lukewarm "Christians" performing deeds in the name of "serving Jesus," the common denominator is "FLESH". In all such instances, the idols of "self" have risen above the call of the Spirit to let God be God. John's first epistle ends with the charge, "*My little children, guard yourselves from idols.*"

What could be more "antichrist" than creatures of flesh who reject the One who died to free them?

When the Lord showed me a "picture" of the "church" as He sees her, He allowed me the privilege of feeling His anguish over those who believe they are His but do not really know Him. They are opposing Him. They are "antichrist" because they are wrapped up in SELF, believing they are "serving" Him. He wants a relationship with them. He wants to dwell in them so that His Love can be shed abroad in their hearts, and be through them a river of Living Water to those outside the fold. But they care only for themselves and their deeds. Jesus said "*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done*

many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [Hebrew meaning suggests: 'practice nothingness']" (Matthew 7:22-23)

How many are there who are causing multitudes of souls to turn their focus to some worldly figure "out there somewhere"? Do they find it more exciting to attract crowds to their dramatic accounts of "prophecy revealed" rather than preach the gospel of the Cross and the need for those souls to come to Jesus before it is too late? Are some even twisting Scriptures in an attempt to "scare hell out of people?" No scare tactics will ever keep man out of hell nor will they ever bring about what only the Holy Spirit's convicting power can accomplish. No man comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him. (John 6:44)

The son of perdition

Paul uses the term in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: *"Let no man beguile you in any wise: for it [Christ's second coming] will not be, except the falling away first, and the **man of sin** be revealed, the son of **perdition**; he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God."*

The "falling away" is the apostasy of which we have heard much and of which I have written extensively. The "man of sin" is about to be revealed, or "uncovered." This man of sin, the "son of perdition," is what we could call the "offspring of *ruin or loss*" as the Greek word is defined.

Think back to the Garden of Eden, when "death" came upon all mankind through the knowledge of good and evil. And remember Noah's day, when men were **only evil** and all flesh was destroyed with the exception of righteous Noah and his family. Fast forward to Jesus' day when He said *"And then shall many be offended [Greek: 'stumble'], and shall betray one another, and shall **hate one another**. And **many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many**. And because **iniquity shall abound**, the **love of many shall wax cold**. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."* (Matthew 24:10-13) Then we have Paul telling Timothy, *"But **evil men** and imposters shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."* (2 Timothy 3:13) In God's eyes, the worst evil is that which keeps souls from coming to Jesus.

Let's get back to Paul's words to the Thessalonians. The "temple of God" was not a temple made with hands. Ever since Jesus' death and resurrection, God's new temple is in regenerated man. But evil has accelerated, as was prophesied by Jesus and Paul as seen in the last paragraph. The unregenerate pretenders have not surrendered to Jesus and are opposing Him by attempting to be their own "gods". Of course, they have convinced themselves they are "serving Him," but in their hearts they are serving "self". They are deceived, and are deceiving others. God's Spirit can only dwell in a temple that has room for Him. When we are full of self, we prevent the work God desires to do in order for us to be made into the image of His Son. We will even become detestable in His sight to the degree that the term "son of perdition" is a deserving title - all because flesh has

reproduced as flesh (spiritually speaking). We will have exhausted all opportunity to surrender until suddenly it is too late.

The Apostle Peter had a strong message regarding false prophets both then and now. In these words of his, he repeatedly uses the one Greek word which was also translated "perdition." *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in **damnable** heresies, even denying [Greek: 'rejecting'] the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift **destruction**. And many shall follow their **pernicious ways**; by reason of whom [Greek: 'through whom'] the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their **damnation** slumbereth not."* (2 Peter 2:1-3) Notice how many different words (in bold) came from that one Greek word. If only we could hear the fervor in the voices of the Apostles who gave their all for the sake of the gospel and the Saviour they loved and served!

Today, there are countless false teachers through whom the way of truth is blasphemed by the very doctrines they put forth. We all could probably name many, but the most dangerous ones are those who are not as blatant, but who present just enough truth with a hint of error, and draw souls into "*damnable heresies*." And this, very often, is unbeknownst to not only the hearers but the preachers also. The "just enough truth" leads them to complacency and blindness to the leaven of error. The nature of deception is stealth and is so insidious that man has no idea he is being deceived. Unless there is repentance - and soon - they will not be a part of the Body of Christ. What body will they then be a part of?

The body of antichrist

When I asked the Lord to show me the meaning of Calvary, He led me in a study of the word "flesh". The study involved writing out every verse in the Bible that contained that word. From that study came several others, done in the same way, which showed without question the reason Jesus came to this earth and died. What I am writing here, today, is a result of those studies in the presence of the greatest Teacher - the Spirit of Truth. What a glorious time it was!

I say all that to say this: Please do not take lightly what you are reading here. If anyone were to do an in-depth study under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, they would reach the same conclusions as those presented in this article.

So, what is the "body of antichrist"? To state it simply, the corporate body of apostate "man of sin/flesh" makes up antichrist's body. Just as Christ has His Body of faithful believers who live and walk by the Spirit, antichrist has his body of disbelievers who faithfully pursue the life of self and flesh which leads to death. With the meaning of "perdition" being "*ruin or loss*" we can see where this is going.

In Romans chapter one, Paul told how, in spite of having heard the truth, man in his fleshly "wisdom" forsook God and began to worship and serve the creature more than the Creator. Doesn't that sound a lot like what we see today? Man exalts self and flesh, making gods of those who tickle their ears; all in the name of "worshipping God." Later on, Paul speaks more on flesh when he tells us that the "***mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God:***" (Romans 8:6-7a)

The beast and his mark

Whenever we hear the words "mark" and "beast" in the same sentence, we immediately think of Revelation 13:18: "*Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding let him count the number of the beast: for it is **the number of a man**; and his number is Six hundred and sixty six.*" Like the verse says, 666 is the number of man - a mere man of flesh.

There are places in both Old and New Testaments where man is referred to as a "beast". One such verse reads, "*I said in mine heart, It [judgment] is because of the sons of men, that God may prove them, and that they may see that they themselves are but as beasts.*" (Ecclesiastes 3:18) In Second Peter and Jude we find the word again, and in both cases the context is the same. Peter was speaking of the false teachers when he said, "*But these, as **natural brute beasts**, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;*" (2 Peter 2:12) Then we have Jude's words regarding the same, "*But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as **brute beasts**, in those things they corrupt themselves.*" (Jude 10)

In my old Bible of Gran's, the Greek words for "brute beasts" were translated "*creatures without reason.*" The false teachers of whom Peter and Jude spoke so strongly were irrational, like animals made to be taken and destroyed. This tells us that God does not look kindly upon the work of false teachers. And that is putting it mildly. The day is coming when they WILL perish in their own corruption. They have led thousands down a path to corruption and a day of reckoning is coming. The Greek word for "corruption" is defined as "*decay, that is, **ruin** (spontaneous or inflicted, literally or figuratively).*"

Except for the last six verses, the whole book of Jude foretells the folly of flesh in the mockers who "minister," and what the end will be for them - the wicked creatures of flesh that they are. God did say that judgment begins at His house, as Peter tells us. "*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house [Greek: 'family'] of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"* (1 Peter 4:17)

We can see the relationship between the body of antichrist and the "brute beasts" because both are entrenched in flesh, having rejected both Father and Son in their self-driven endeavors. They already bear the mark of the beast. It is evident to the Father, but those who follow them seem blind to what is taking place. This takes us back to Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, where he says, "*And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the*

*Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of his coming: even he whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they **received not the love of the truth**, that they might be saved. And for this cause **God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**" (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12)*

It is my belief that the "lawless one" of which Paul speaks is the beast that emerges as the ultimate manifestation of flesh, having given himself over to Satan. This great leader of all flesh will continue in his opposition of Messiah, until Jesus comes with the flaming fire of His jealousy to forever destroy - **FLESH!**

The destruction of flesh was prophesied in Ezekiel and Revelation. When John was shown Jesus coming as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, he saw "*an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to **all the birds that fly in mid heaven, come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great.**" (Revelation 19:17-18) This is the same message Ezekiel had prophesied, when he said, "And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; **Speak unto the birds** of every sort, and to **every beast** of the field, **Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. And ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God.**" (Ezekiel 39:17-20)*

God's ultimate revenge came in the form of a mocking sacrifice of flesh, made for the scavengers of the air and field that feast on flesh. Now look at what follows: "*And I saw the **beast**, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. And the **beast** was taken, and with him the **false prophet** that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he **deceived them that had received the mark of the beast**, and them that worshipped his image: they twain were **cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone.** And the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of his mouth: and **all the birds were filled with their flesh.**" (Revelation 19:19-21)*

The seal of God

Just as the apostate creatures of flesh bear the mark of the one to whom they have unwittingly pledged allegiance, God has put His own seal on those faithful believers who make up the Body of Christ. In Revelation 9:4, these words of John's are recorded: "*And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green*

*thing, neither any tree; but only such men as have not **the seal of God on their foreheads.**"*

The word "seal" is translated from the Greek word which means "*a signet (as fencing in or **protecting from misappropriation**); by implication the stamp impressed (as a mark of privacy, or genuineness), literally or figuratively.*" "Misappropriation" is the taking for oneself to use exclusively for ill.

In Revelation 3:10, in his letter to the church at Philadelphia, I believe Jesus was speaking of "protection *from misappropriation*" when He said, "*Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*" Those who faithfully walk in the Love of God are obeying His one commandment. They are the only ones of whom Jesus has nothing but good to say. They have His seal in their foreheads and no one can take their crown. Or, as Jesus said in John 10:27-29, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*"

Both the seal of God and the mark of the beast are in the forehead, and are representative of the mind. This is one example of the symbolism that is especially prevalent in the book of Revelation, as well as the book of Daniel. Remember how Paul said that the "*mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace.*" The mind of the flesh follows after anything that is fleshly or of the "feel good" nature. This leads to eternal death. But the mind of the Spirit follows the Spirit's voice and can only lead to Life and peace.

The abomination that desolates

According to the Hebrew language, the phrase "*abomination that desolates*" (Daniel 11:31) could also read "the idolatrousness that stupefies." The idolatrousness that is inherent in those who reject Jesus and choose to follow after the flesh has a stupefying effect. They become like zombies, listless and mechanical in their delusional, stupefied state. This is not the only mention of "stupefying" in the Bible. Another is the word "tares," as in Jesus' parable, which actually means "darnel" or "false grain," and darnel means "stupefied." The false grain "darnel" is prone to infestation by a fungus which makes the seeds poisonous. We can see how the "tares" of which Jesus spoke are spreading their stupefying poison; just like the idolatrousness that stupefies.

Like Daniel's account of those that "*do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits,*" the "good seeds" in Jesus' parable of the tares will come through in His power and strength. (Daniel 11:31-32; Matthew 13:24-30)

We are approaching the day of the separation of true and false, Spirit-filled and flesh, and the Body of Christ from the body of antichrist. But leading up to that day, the true will suffer persecution - not from the world, but from the religious fleshly body of antichrist.

The stupefied false seeds, the sons of the evil one sown by the devil himself, will rail against the true Body of Christ with the "flatteries" of which Daniel spoke in Daniel 11:34. The apostate ones will use "flattering remarks meant to persuade" (Hebrew meaning of 'flatteries') in a grand effort to draw back into bondage those who have followed Jesus away from apostasy. The blinded apostate ones believe they are on God's side and it is their duty to "win back" the "backslidden ones."

My friends, we are in for a rough "ride." To those entrenched in flesh, the increasing manifestation of evil spirits will have the appearance of the working of God's Spirit. But it will be the *power and signs and lying wonders* from Satan. More than ever we will see the controlling spirits, the religious spirits like Jezebel, and every other evil spirit that operates in the realm of religious flesh. Like I said in my book, "*Flesh is the door through which Satan walks. He planned it that way from the beginning.*"

Our only hope is to seek the Lord more than ever, so that we will hear and recognize His voice as He "keeps us from the hour of trial" that is sifting and trying those that dwell in the earth. The trial must come in order to separate the true from the false. Like in the days of the early ekklesia, purification will come through persecution.

Even more important than our own protection, will be the testimony of Jesus that some without Christ will witness because of Christ in us. I firmly believe that our Lord will work wonders on our behalf, which will make an indisputable "statement" of HIS power, and He will draw souls to Himself. After all, the "*testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*" (Revelation 19:10b)

Also remember Jude's words: "***Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have mercy, who are in doubt: and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.***" (Jude 21-23)

The Antichrist "Bride"

"For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is in Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:2-3

The Bride of Christ is comprised of the faithful believers who have responded to the Love of the Father and come to put their trust in His Son. At the same time there are the unfaithful ones who may have at one time known Him but have become apostate. Then there are those who believe they are His because they "prayed the sinner's prayer" and subsequently were told they were "born again" and began living a "religious" life in their own strength, according to "rules" of apostate man.

In these days, the true Bride of Christ is being prepared for that Day when Jesus comes to receive His Bride to Himself. But what of the apostate ones who honestly believe they are His, yet go their own way in a deluded state believing they are ready to meet Him? In reality they are opposing His every effort to draw them to Himself. They prefer to carry on in their fleshly existence, which is of the world. (1 John 2:15-16) James wrote, "*Ye adulteresses* [Greek: 'a (male) paramour; **figuratively apostate**'], *know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God.*" (James 4:4) As 1 John 2:22 shows, they are "antichrist" because they have rejected both Father and Son.

In this article we are going to look at "relationship" as God intended. We will also see what becomes of the "antichrist bride." My prayer is that all who read this will be gripped, as I have been, by the reality of the truths presented here.

In "*Who Is Antichrist?*" we showed what the Bible tells us "antichrist" is. Some Bible translations place "the" before antichrist, which makes it appear that there is a particular person who will be known as "The Antichrist." Other translations actually capitalize the word, suggesting that it is a proper name. This is of man's doing and has been accepted and passed on through tradition. In this age of apostasy, millions have come to believe that "Antichrist" is one single individual who rises up to rule the world. I know from experience that the "voices" out there are so loud that it is easy to become caught up in such a prominent concept. But it is another one of those insidious things that has crept into the Body of Christ to keep us from seeing who the true "antichrist" is. For those of you who find that the widely published ideas "make sense," I ask you to set it all aside and hear the heart of the Father. It is of utmost importance that we keep as our focus the central message in the Bible.

What is the central message of the Bible? The answer is, "Relationship with God and His Son Jesus Christ." Let us begin with the foundational understanding of relationship - the reason we were created in the first place. This is the standard by which we must always "measure" everything we read in the Bible. If we are faithful in this, we are less likely to be led astray into strange doctrines.

As soon as the last article was posted, the Lord began pouring into my spirit the things He desired to reveal in this one. I was in awe, as He brought scripture after scripture to my mind and showed how each related to the other. We may read scriptures in a particular context, and too often out of context, seeing only in part what God has given us through His Spirit and penned by the scribes of old. The Bible is His whole counsel and we must consider that with Jesus being the Alpha and the Omega, everything from Genesis to Revelation IS the context of God's word to us.

Throughout the Bible we can find countless passages where symbolism is used to convey a powerful message. And so very often, word meanings are an integral part of the "key" to the message. It begins in Genesis and flows all the way to the end of Revelation. If we take something literally that is intended to be symbolic we will miss the vast majority of what God is saying. This, I believe, is where so much error has infiltrated the Body of

Christ and moved the masses from the simplicity that is found only in Him. We just don't hear His heart!

Man was created for relationship with his Creator, and nothing has changed. The Bible is full of "patterns" but the pattern of marriage between man and woman is the most important of all. It was put in place to keep us mindful of our relationship with God and of our coming Bridegroom Jesus. But it began long ago, in the Old Testament. Even at creation God declared that man and woman would come together and be "*one flesh*." (Genesis 2:24)

The Old Testament "husband"

Although it is not the only one translated "husband" there is one particular Hebrew word which is quite significant. That word is "baal", and means "*a master; hence a **husband**, or (figuratively) owner (often used with another noun in modifications of this latter sense)*." Its meaning is derived from another Hebrew word, also spelled "baal" and defined as: "*to be master; hence (as denominative from H1167) to marry*." It is now easy to see the relationship between it and the capitalized "Baal" which is "*Baal, a Phoenician deity*," as the Hebrew dictionary shows. It was translated "*Baal, [plural] Baalim*" and is "*the same as H1167*" - the word for "husband."

Israel was regarded as the spouse of Jehovah, as we see in Jeremiah 3:14a: "*Return, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am a husband [Hebrew: baal] unto you:*" With Israel being His "wife", and from the many accounts of her unfaithfulness come the strong words of rebuke He used when He spoke through His prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He used words like "*whoredom, harlot, whoring after, playing the harlot, committing adultery and bill of divorcement*." Here is one example: "*...thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols*." (Ezekiel 23:30) Also, in the New Testament, the words "*adultery and fornication*" appear; often referring to man's unfaithfulness to God through turning to idolatry. When we see the constant use of such strong, descriptive words we can know assuredly that relationship and faithfulness to Him is uppermost in God's mind.

Symbolism can be seen in word definitions, as shown here with "apostasy" and "divorce" having the same Greek root. In the New Testament, the word "*divorcement*" comes from the Greek "apostasion" (Greek #647) which means "*properly something separative, that is, (specifically) divorce*." From this, comes the derivation of the word "apostasy." The Greek dictionary gives the definition as, "*Feminine of the same as G647; defection from truth (properly the state), ('apostasy')*." This, as we all know, is the "falling away" that brings to the fore the corporate antichrist body, the "son of perdition". As we said in the last article, "*son of perdition*" could also be translated "offspring of ruin or loss." The antichrist "bride" becomes even more powerful in her opposition, with increasing power from Satan the adversary. She has no idea that God has brought "strong delusion" so that she would believe the lies of the enemy. (2 Thessalonians 2:11)

If we go back to 2 Thessalonians 2:3, we see how Paul makes it clear that the apostate ones embody the "man of sin." This is another one of those symbolic passages. If we read verses 3-12, keeping in mind this symbolism, we will see the horror of what Paul was communicating. Remember too that the "man of sin" is a "man of flesh."

The mystery of love

God is Love, and when we are born anew by His Spirit, Love comes to dwell in our spirit, replacing "self" which is our spiritual condition of sinful flesh. 1 John 4:19 tells us that *"We love because He first loved us."* Christ in us evokes love in response to His Love, for *"the love of God is shed abroad [Greek: 'bestowed'] in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."* The fruit of the Spirit is Love...!

There was a "natural" response placed in woman when she was taken from man's side, next to his heart and protected under his arm. In the same way that we love because God first loved us, the woman loves in response to the love shown by the husband. To look at the "pattern" in our lives, the husband, as the "head of the wife," has the responsibility to love her as much as he loves himself. Women were created as tender, responsive beings; we respond to the loving "headship" of our husband when he, as a true godly man, lays down his life for his wife. Does this sound idealistic? It is Bible! Hear the words of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:22-24: *"Wives, be in subjection unto [be disposed or inclined toward] your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church: being **himself the saviour of the body**. But as the church is subject to [is disposed or inclined toward] Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything."* A man who is fully surrendered to the "headship" of Christ, walking in the in-dwelling Love, will have a wife who is easily "disposed or inclined toward" him. A man whose wife cannot respond to him, is not truly surrendered to Christ. And a Christian woman who does not respond to her godly husband is in rebellion and disobedience to God. A man has no biblical right to demand that his wife be in subjection to him when he is not in subjection to Christ. Paul's admonition gives us a pattern for our good and it will "work" every time.

Then Paul elaborates further, detailing the responsibilities of the husband. *"**Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loves his own wife loves himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but **nourishes and cherishes** it, even as Christ also the church: because **we are members of his body**."*** (Ephesians 5:25-30) How often do we hear more emphasis on the wife's submission to her husband than on the husband's submission to God? When done in the right order, all will be as it should. The wife will have no problem following the lead of her godly husband: she will know without question that she is loved and cherished. How comforting it is for a woman whose husband is a lover of God and in whom the fruit of the Spirit is evident!

Next, we have Paul repeating the message from Genesis 2:24. "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the twain shall become one flesh.*" The spiritual aspect of this pattern in Paul's teaching is seen in the next verse: "***This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.***" And he ends with, "*Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she fear [Greek: 'be in awe of'] her husband.*" (Ephesians 5:31-33) Is there any woman who could not be in awe of her man who is sold out to Jesus and leading his home in a life of faith in Him? This would not be the awe of a fleshly husband, but a quiet, peaceful sense of reverence for her loving "head" who cherishes her above himself.

What glorious "oneness" the Creator ordained for us! What a loving God to reveal His Love in such a practical way. First of all, to be lived out in this life and then for eternity with Jesus whose heart-cry was that we would be one in Him. But what dreadful devastation man has brought upon himself, in refusing to submit to this One who gave His life for His body of believers. Apostate man has resorted to "self", having fallen away from Truth.

Paul spoke to Timothy about such a thing when he said, "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be **lovers of their own selves**, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection [Greek: 'hard hearted towards kindred'], trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, **lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God**; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*" (2 Timothy 3:1-5) We see that the "perilous times" are comprised of man's entrenchment in flesh as "lovers of self." The other "attributes" are also flesh-based and very much opposite the fruit of the Spirit. The lovers of self have a "form of godliness" and fully believe they are "Christians" but the evidence in their lives is anything but godliness: they have no power because the Spirit does not in-dwell them. Their "god" is not the God of the Bible, the One who created them for Himself. They believe they are the Bride of Christ but what "master" [baal] have they given themselves over to?

The antichrist spirit lures his "bride" through the lust of the flesh. This spirit has so permeated the apostate church that they fall for every fleshly "sign and wonder" that comes along. Many "ministers" have been taken in by the antichrist lies to the degree that they stoop to unbelievable depths of degradation; often being exposed publicly and bringing shame on the Name of Christ. Peter had this to say about the false ministers who have turned away from the Truth: "*For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the **lusts of the flesh**, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.*" (2 Peter 2:18-19) This speaks not only of moral "wantonness" but allegiance to the antichrist spirit of error in the promotion of "prosperity" and other "gospels". They may think they are following God, deceiving those to whom they

"minister," but the end result is far worse than if they merely had "slipped up." In their own deceived state they are fully convinced they are on God's side.

The character traits found in the above passage from 2 Timothy are thoroughly "antichrist." He is leaving his mark on all those who have been deceived by Satan's lies. The great tragedy is that the antichrist bride sees herself as the Bride of Christ and feels she is leading others to Him. But she has committed adultery against Jesus and is unwittingly now a "whore", enticing many AWAY from Him.

The great whore

The Bride of Christ is also known as the "Holy City Jerusalem" but what "city" is the antichrist bride? Revelation 17:4-5 holds the answer: *"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication [Greek: 'harlotry'/figuratively 'idolatry']; and upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."*

Very often peoples in the Bible have been referred to as "cities" and the 17th verse verifies that the great whore Babylon is made up of throngs of people from many nations and tongues. According to Strong's Greek dictionary, "Babylon" is a "type of tyranny." A synonym of "tyranny" is "oppression." The oppressive rule of the great whore who assumes she is the prepared "Bride of Christ," has spread around the world. Her attitude is described in Revelation 18:7: *"How much soever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton...for she said in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning."* This fleshly antichrist "bride" sees herself "saved and ready for the rapture" and does not expect to see the "mourning" of tribulation. But as verse 24 says, she is guilty of the blood of all those faithful ones who have died for the sake of the truth (that she did not love). *"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth."*

Immediately preceding that last verse, these words were heard: *"And the voice of harpers, and minstrels, and fluteplayers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in thee; and the voice of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants [Greek: '(wholesale) tradesmen'] were the princes [Greek: 'grandees/important persons'] of the earth; for with thy sorcery [Greek: 'poison/spell-giving potion'] were all the nations deceived [Greek: 'caused to roam from safety, truth, or virtue']." (Revelation 18:22-23)*

No longer will their music of "worship to God" be heard, nor will there be anything left of this life as they have known it - everything will be a thing of the past. These ones who have promoted the apostate gospel and fleshly lifestyle have been received around the

world, enticing others to want the same. Their poisonous, spell-binding and stupefying "sorcery" has caused many nations of people to roam from truth, and thus, salvation.

John then indicates what follows, using the words "*After these things...*," as found in the very next verse which is the beginning of the nineteenth chapter. He speaks of God's judgment of the great whore and of the sounds of true worship around the throne. Then he hears these words: "*Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory to [God]: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*" (Revelation 19:7)

Later on, in that same (19th) chapter, can be found a graphic description of the destruction of flesh in God's mocking sacrifice to the scavengers of the air.

Some final thoughts

We have all been a part of the apostate system. We inherited it! But God is calling us to come out of her so as not to be partakers of her calamity. "*For her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities [Greek: 'wrong done'].*" (Revelation 18:4-5) May God give us a heart of compassion and be ready to snatch some "*out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*" (Jude 23) Let us never stoop to judging anyone. Judgment will come soon enough - for all of us. We have plenty to keep us busy, working out our "*own salvation with fear and trembling.*" (Philippians 2:12)

This has been a very difficult article to write. It is not a pleasant task to describe the apostate "church" as God sees her. After the last article, some folks emailed to point out that there is an "Antichrist" who will be an individual. And with all the grand perceptions being put forth over the past decades, it is easy to be swayed in that direction. But when it came right down to it, I needed to follow the Lord's leading and write as He said I should.

There are some who say that America is Babylon the great. When I read the book of Revelation, I too had that thought but the thing that is "American" (including Canada too) is that this continent is the seat of error when it comes to the gospel. From here, our "great tradesmen" have sold a stupefying anemic "gospel" around the world - some making a lot of money in the process. It is the apostate PEOPLE who have twisted the Word - not the country. It is PEOPLE who were created for God. It is PEOPLE for whom Christ died. It is PEOPLE who fell away from Truth. It is PEOPLE who make up Jesus' Bride. It is PEOPLE who make up the false, antichrist bride. And it is PEOPLE whom God will judge. If I am wrong in the interpretation presented here, may I be found guilty only of pointing PEOPLE to Jesus Christ our Savior. I stand answerable to Him.

The Antichrist Shepherd

This is the age of apostasy! We live in a day when deception is all around us and increasing at an alarming rate. As has been said previously, the nature of deception is "stealth" and is not easily discernable. In what is commonly called "the Church" there is no area left un-touched--deception is everywhere, having turned countless souls away from single-minded devotion to Jesus. This statement speaks volumes: "*The false church has enough truth to deceive the faithful and enough lies to damn its followers.*" (Unknown)

The faithful church-goers see the "falling away (apostasy)" to be the "forsaking of gathering together." (Hebrews 10:25). They think that those who have chosen to follow Jesus, rather than some man, are the defectors from the faith. We must get right to the core of the issue to see what, in reality, has transpired. Like the true Gospel, it is simple but man has complicated it by attempting to understand it with a mind of flesh.

There is that word again! FLESH!! As I wrote in *Calling Forth The Remnant*, every problem within the "Church" has as its source that one thing called "flesh." Flesh is the reason Jesus had to die, but that basic truth has been misconstrued in the mind of fleshly man. That is error at its worst!

"For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." (2 John 7)

In recent years we have seen increased interest in what some refer to as "end time prophecy." The question as to who will be "the Antichrist" is uppermost in the minds of many. Numerous names have been attached to this mysterious one who is to come and rule the world in a reign of terror. Tradition has it that this "one" will be "the Antichrist," but it is another one of those things embraced by creatures of flesh who are so easily swayed by what they hear. Such tradition has been handed down from generation to generation and accepted without question. But we must always go back to the only references to "*antichrist*," which are found in 1 and 2 John, and ask God's Spirit to open our eyes to the truth.

The articles "*Who is Antichrist*" and "*The Antichrist Bride*" cover some areas of what the Bible tells us. But there is so much more. As surely as there are "antichrists" in the world, resulting in an "antichrist bride," there are also "antichrist shepherds." With the meaning of the word "antichrist" being "opponent of Messiah," we begin to realize that countless "shepherds" (pastors) among us today are opposing Messiah. These shepherds may be found not only in the institutional church, but in the out-of-church community as well.

Now let's look at what the Bible says about shepherds (pastors).

Jesus makes a strong statement about the "shepherd" that opposes Him, when He says, "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers [Greek: 'leads together'] not with me scatters.*" (Matthew 12:30)

The issue of flocks being "*scattered*" was addressed by the prophets of old. Here is what Jeremiah said: "*For the pastors are become brutish, and **have not sought the LORD**: therefore they shall not prosper [Hebrew: 'be circumspect/vigilant'], and all **their flocks shall be scattered.**" (Jeremiah 10:21) Later on, Jeremiah also prophesied, "*Woe to the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; You have **scattered** my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited [Hebrew: 'cared for'] them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, says the LORD.*" (Jeremiah 23:1-2)*

There is a price to be paid for scattering the precious sheep of our Lord's fold! What makes a shepherd an opposer of Messiah? Was he ever truly born anew, having received the new heredity that comes when Christ [Messiah] comes to dwell in man's spirit?

The disciple

According to the Greek dictionary, a "disciple" is a "learner" or "pupil." If there is a pupil, there is also a teacher. What are the disciples of an antichrist shepherd learning? And where is this counterfeit shepherd leading "his" sheep? What authority does he have to usurp this place reserved for God's true shepherds?

To be a leader, a person must first learn to follow. And Jesus gave good counsel in that area. He said, "*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And **whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.**" (Luke 14:26-27) Complete devotion to Jesus Christ comes solely through death to the self-life. Oswald Chambers gave his students some excellent advice, when he said "*Never consider whether you are of use; but ever consider that you are not your own but His.*" If anyone attempts to accomplish anything "for God" it is futile if it is based in flesh and the knowledge of good and evil.*

Oswald Chambers also said, "*Beware of counterfeiting the love of God by working along the line of natural human sympathy, because that will end in blaspheming the love of God.*" Those are strong words, but if we look at a conversation Jesus had with Peter we will see the vital relationship between "love" and "shepherding." Jesus appeared to His disciples a third time after His resurrection and asked Peter if he loved Him more than did the others. Jesus did not address Him as "Peter" which is the name He had given him when they first met; He called him "Simon, son of Jonas." Here is Peter's response to Jesus: "*Yes, Lord; you know that I love [Greek: 'have affection for'] you. He said to him, Feed my lambs. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love [Greek: 'love'] me? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you know that I love [have affection for] you. He said to him, Tend [as a shepherd] my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love [have affection for] me? Peter was grieved [Greek: 'saddened'] because he said to him the third time, Do you love me? And he said to him, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love [have affection for] you. Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep.*" (John 21:14-17)

Peter was pretty good at making promises to Jesus - usually from his "natural human sympathy." Look at this next passage where Jesus is speaking to His disciples after Judas had betrayed Him: "*A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. Simon Peter said to him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, Where it is I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow me afterwards. Peter said to him, Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake. Jesus answered him, Will you lay down your life for my sake? Truly, truly, I say to you, The cock shall not crow, till you have denied me three times.*" (John 13:34-38)

Now let's go back to the passage from John 21. After Jesus' repeated questions to Peter about loving Him and feeding and shepherding the sheep, He came back to the question of Peter following Him. "*Most assuredly I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and used to walk where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and will carry you where you do not wish. **But this He said, signifying by what death he [Peter] would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.'***" (John 21:18-19 EMTV) That was Jesus' way of saying that Peter would follow Him by way of the cross. This time Peter would deny himself rather than denying Jesus, as he had previously. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and be the first to preach the message of the Cross and see souls come to Jesus. And in Peter's first epistle, he said "*For you were like sheep going astray, but you have turned back now to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*" (1 Peter 2:25 EMTV) Do you think that maybe Peter finally got the message?

The good Shepherd

Here we have Jesus' own words: "*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling [Greek: 'wage earner'], and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches [Greek #726] them, and scatters the sheep. The [wage earner] flees, because he is a [wage earner], and cares not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*" (John 10:11-14) The Greek word for "catches" is also used as "pluck" in this next verse: "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck [Greek #726] them out of my hand.*" (John 10:27-28)

If a shepherd is following the true Shepherd, he will have been born anew by God's Spirit and Love will be dwelling in him. This follower of the true Shepherd will, from the "store" of Love, "feed" and "tend" the sheep as Jesus had challenged Peter to do. If a shepherd fits the description as found in Jeremiah, he has no Love and cares only for himself.

Jesus, the great example, has a true shepherd's heart and His sheep are precious to Him. We see this in Mark's record of Jesus' life and the gospel. "*And Jesus, when he came out,*

saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." (Mark 6:34) As I said in my book, "The true fold is the Shepherd's fold. Jesus is the true Shepherd, but He became a Lamb and gave His life so that His fold might be full. The names of those in His fold can be found in the Lamb's Book of Life."

The self-centered shepherd

Countless "shepherds" all around us see "their church" as the "only place to be" and those of "their flock" must live according to the dictates of the counterfeit shepherds. If they fail to "measure up" to the standards set up by the antichrist shepherd, they will become outcasts who are shunned by the "faithful" followers of that same "shepherd." What of the antichrist shepherds who fail to follow the true Shepherd by way of the Cross? A. W. Tozer had this to say: "A clergyman is a man - and often he has a proud little kingdom of his own, a kingdom of position and often of pride and sometimes with power. Clergymen must wrestle with the spiritual implications of the crucified life just like everyone else, and to be thoroughgoing men of God and spiritual examples to the flock of God, they must die daily to the allurements of their own little kingdoms of position and prestige." (*Who Put Jesus on the Cross?* by A.W. Tozer)

A quote from another of Tozer's books shows us the priority of too many in this day. What would Tozer say of the present-day state of the "church" if he penned these words decades ago? "*The crowds-at-any-price mania has taken a firm grip on American Christianity and is the motivating power back of a shockingly high percentage of all religious activity. Men and churches compete for the attention of the paying multitudes who are brought in by means of any currently popular gadget or gimmick ostensibly to have their souls saved, but, if the truth were told, often for reasons not so praiseworthy as this...*" (*The Size of the Soul* by A. W. Tozer)

Many people today are looking for a great revival but what we have is a "revival" of religious flesh. My friend Helen wrote to me in an email, "*We Canadians love our comfort and we love to pamper the flesh, we adorn it, we flaunt it, we covet the place of showing it off; we constantly vie for attention, and unfortunately when our lives should be hid with Christ in God, we hide Christ in us and show off self.*"

God's warning to the antichrist shepherd

God does not mince words when it comes to game-playing by counterfeit shepherds. Ezekiel prophesied of such with these forceful words: "*And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do **feed themselves!** should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat, and **clothe yourselves with the wool, you kill them that are fed: but you feed not the flock.** The diseased you have not strengthened, neither have you healed the sick, neither have you bound up the broken, neither have you brought again those that were driven away, **neither have you sought those that were lost; but with force and with cruelty have you***

ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered." (Ezekiel 34:1-5)

But God has given us Jesus! Following the above warning, Ezekiel speaks this promise from the LORD God: "*I will seek those that were lost, and bring again those that were driven away, and will bind up the broken, and will strengthen the sick:*" and he followed that with this: "*but I will destroy the fat [Hebrew: 'rich'] and the strong [Hebrew: 'hard']; I will feed [Hebrew: also 'shepherd'] them with judgment.*" (Ezekiel 34:16)

One day very soon, untold horror will suddenly dawn upon the hearts of those antichrist disciples who have followed the antichrist shepherds; all the while looking for "the Antichrist" whose mark they fear taking. In reality, they already bear the mark of the antichrist spirit--they have been deceived, and will be defenseless as the final scheme of things unfolds. The ultimate manifestation of creatures of flesh, the Beast of Revelation, will have them for his own. He will ruthlessly devour and destroy them--just as the antichrist shepherds have devoured and scattered the sheep of their "own folds."

Psalm 37 gives great comfort and is something to keep before our eyes as a reminder of the place to which we must run - that "place" is in the Lord, the Great Shepherd. David the Psalmist knew the Lord as his Shepherd. (Psalm 23)

*"A Psalm of David. Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be envious against them that work unrighteousness. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. **Trust in the LORD**, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. **Delight yourself also in the LORD**; and he shall give you the desires of your heart. **Commit your way unto the LORD**; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall make your righteousness to go forth as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. **Rest in the LORD**, and wait patiently for him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself, it tends only to evil-doing. **For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.** For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: you shall diligently consider his place, and he shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. **The wicked plots against the just**, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. **The Lord shall laugh at him: for he sees that his day is coming.** The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, to slay such as be in the way: their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. Better is little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. **For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous.** The LORD knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the time of evil: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; in smoke shall they consume away. The wicked borrows, and pays not again: but the righteous deals graciously, and gives. For such as are blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that are cursed of him shall be cut off. A man's goings are established of the LORD; and he delights in his*

*way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread. All the day long he deals graciously, and lends; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. For the LORD loves justice [Hebrew: 'including a particular right, or privilege'], and forsakes not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. The mouth of the righteous talks of wisdom, and his tongue speaks judgment [Hebrew: 'justice']. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil. But one passed by, and, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the latter end of that man is peace. As for the transgressors, they shall be destroyed together: the latter end of the wicked shall be cut off. **But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strong hold in the time of trouble. And the LORD helps them, and rescues them: he rescues them from the wicked, and saves them, because they have taken refuge in him.**"*

The Antichrist Prophet

The feverish search by many to learn the identity of "the Antichrist" has produced a plethora of ideas--all spoken with an air of authority. In this time of financial turbulence and political mayhem there have emerged "prophets" to give their spin on what is about to occur. Of course, they all attempt to prognosticate using Bible passages to validate their words. We hear them on television, read them in magazines, on the Internet and on mailing lists sent to subscribers, many of whom have itching ears.

People today have a lust for "prophetic words" to tell them what is coming. With ears wide open, they are ready to receive anything that is spoken as a "thus saith the Lord" *prophetic* word. There seems to be little discernment as to whether the *prophecy* is inspired by the Spirit of God, or simply the words of a popular "prophet."

Who are the true prophets and who are the false? Who is the "antichrist prophet?" What does the Bible say?

Prophets, prophets everywhere!

In the Bible we learn that prophets were God's mouthpiece. He has always had those who conveyed His message to the people. God's prophets almost always called the hearers to repentance, using impassioned pleas for them to turn from destructive paths and actions for the sake of their eternal souls. We also find numerous accounts of false prophets who misled and deceived God's people. And to this day we have both true and false prophets.

In the New Testament, there is reference to God's prophets. The Apostle Paul spoke of the various functions--gifts provided by our Lord for His body. *"And He gave some as apostles, and some as **prophets**, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ..."* (Eph 4:11-12 EMTV)

May I add here that there is no such thing as an "office" of any of the above functions. As we covered in the word study on "minister" we found the misused word "office," courtesy of the King James translators.

Both the Hebrew (O.T.) and Greek (N.T.) words for *prophet* have the same definition: "a *prophet* or (generally) *inspired* man" [Hebrew]. "...a *foreteller* ("prophet"); by analogy an *inspired speaker*" [Greek].

The question would be, "where does the *inspiration* come from?"

If God is the Source, His Spirit gives the inspiration and the prophet is true--his words will come to pass. If the source is the evil, fleshly store of "self"--rooted in the knowledge of good and evil--the prophet is false and his words will not come to pass. He is an "antichrist" prophet, opposing Messiah who came to free us from sinful "self." Those may seem like strong words, but we are accountable to God for everything we do in the name of Holy Spirit "inspiration."

It is very common these days to find those who call themselves "prophets," or are seen by others as "prophets." There is a difference between one who is given a word of prophecy to utter in a group setting, or on a personal level, and one who is a prophet. Merely giving a prophetic word does not make one a prophet. What we are focusing on in this article is the "prophet"--both true and false.

False prophets have been around for millennia. In the first five verses of Deuteronomy 13, we learn how a false prophet "arises from among the people" and causes them to turn away from the Lord. The prophet's signs and wonders served only to turn people to other gods.

Do we have "false prophets" today who cause God's people to begin following them, rather than point the hearers to Jesus? How many are there who publicly proclaim they are prophets and "wear" the title as though it were a "badge of authority?" Do they not know the life and calling of a true prophet? Have they ever been alone with God in the secret place, agonizing over the souls of men and women before going out and speaking the words God has given them? The calling of God to be a true prophet is not a thing to be trifled with.

Unlike the prophets who "arise up from among the people," there is Another who was prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:18-19. *"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever will not***

hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.
There is no need for further emphasis--the bold text says it all.

Why is it that man prefers to follow after "prophets" rather than hear the words spoken by the greatest Prophet of all? Jesus did not mince words. He addressed the Pharisees of His day with great vehemence over their legalistic deeds, while they neglected love, mercy and obedience to the words He spoke. His words would be no less true for the "Pharisees" of today.

Where are the prophets?

God still has His true prophets. The only thing is, where are they? and why are they not recognized and received by those who profess to be part of the "body of Christ?"

The Bible gives us many examples of true prophets. Jeremiah, for one, was told this: "*Before I formed you in the belly I knew you; and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet unto the nations.*" (Jeremiah 1:5) This young prophet was concerned about the call on his life and this is the response he heard from the Lord: "*See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.*" (Jeremiah 1:10) Read Jeremiah and learn of the strong words the Lord God had him speak to the nations.

Unlike the prophets of old, today's "prophets" like to speak comforting, encouraging or ear-tickling words so they can be popular and have a good following. Look at Jeremiah's Spirit-inspired words to such as already existed in his time: "*Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.*" (Jeremiah 23:31-32)

When eternal souls are at stake, God's true prophets speak His words--at risk of being shunned and even persecuted. They care nothing for themselves but to heed the call of God Whom they serve in whole-hearted surrender to His will. And for the souls of men, they will be willing to suffer like Jeremiah, as we read about here: "*My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is...*" (Jeremiah 38:9)

Picture of a prophet

I would like to quote here from Leonard Ravenhill's *Picture of a Prophet*.

“The group, challenged by the prophet because they are smug and comfortably insulated from a perishing world in their warm but untested theology, is not likely

to vote him "Man of the year" when he refers to them as habitués of the synagogue of Satan!

“The prophet comes to set up that which is upset. His work is to call into line those who are out of line! He is unpopular because he opposes the popular in morality and spirituality. In a day of faceless politicians and voiceless preachers, there is not a more urgent national need than that we cry to God for a prophet! The function of the prophet, as Austin-Sparks once said, *‘has almost always been that of recovery.’*”

“The prophet is God's detective seeking for a lost treasure. The degree of his effectiveness is determined by his measure of unpopularity. Compromise is not known to him.

He has no price tags.
He is totally "otherworldly."
He is unquestionably controversial and unpardonably hostile.
He marches to another drummer!
He breathes the rarefied air of inspiration
He is a "seer" who comes to lead the blind.
He lives in the heights of God and comes into the valley with a "thus saith the Lord."
He shares some of the foreknowledge of God and so is aware of impending judgment.
He lives in "splendid isolation."
He is forthright and outright, but he claims no birthright.
His message is "repent, be reconciled to God or else...!"
His prophecies are parried.
His truth brings torment, but his voice is never void.
He is the villain of today and the hero of tomorrow.
He is excommunicated while alive and exalted when dead!
He is dishonored with epithets when breathing and honored with epitaphs when dead.
He is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, but few "make the grade" in his class.
He is friendless while living and famous when dead.
He is against the establishment in ministry; then he is established as a saint by posterity.
He eats daily the bread of affliction while he ministers, but he feeds the Bread of Life to those who listen.
He walks before men for days but has walked before God for years.
He is a scourge to the nation before he is scourged by the nation.
He announces, pronounces, and denounces!
He has a heart like a volcano and his words are as fire.
He talks to men about God.
He carries the lamp of truth amongst heretics while he is lampooned by men.
He faces God before he faces men, but he is self-effacing.
He hides with God in the secret place, but he has nothing to hide in the marketplace.
He is naturally sensitive but supernaturally spiritual.

He has passion, purpose and pugnacity.
He is ordained of God but disdained by men.”

How do the "prophets" we now see in abundance compare with such a description?

Shame on us for giving ear to the empty words of "pillow prophets" who fail to call us to repentance! Are we so full of self that we are willing to settle for their promised (false sense of) peace, believing we are "right" with God? Are we that deceived that we may fail to examine our hearts before a Holy God?

Spirit of prophecy

Read this verse from the last book of the Bible: "*And I fell before his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'See that you do not! I am your fellow servant, and of your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For **the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**'*" (Revelation 19:10 EMTV)

The Greek word for *testimony* is defined as "evidence given." This tells us that true prophecy points to Jesus--there is "evidence" that He is in it. Let's rephrase that part of the verse. "The evidence given of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

When it comes down to the last days upon this earth, will we have the "testimony of Jesus?" Or, will we still be looking for the latest from the multitude of "antichrist prophets?"

He who testifies these things says, "Surely I come quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)

The Antichrist Christian

The title of this article is unusual, I know. Some may see it as an oxymoron. But it is the one the Lord led me to use. Is there such a person as a *antichrist Christian*? Yes! Bear with me and it will become evident. Every individual who considers him/herself to be a *Christian* is encouraged to read every word with an open mind and with ears attuned to the voice of the Holy Spirit, so that we might receive the message the Lord would have us hear.

First of all, let us look at the word "antichrist." The Greek definition for the word is "opponent of Messiah." And that is the basis for this whole message. We must forget the traditional understanding of "Antichrist" as being some future tyrant who will declare himself as "God," seating himself in a temple built by man. The Bible does not tell us that the "son of perdition," the "beast" of Revelation, the "abomination of desolation" of

which Daniel prophesied, or any other referenced creature is one and the same as "the Antichrist" we hear about--not only in the *church* but also in *the world*. We dare not think for one minute that the enemy of our souls, the one called *Satan*, is not rejoicing at our naïve acceptance of such doctrine. He knows the truth about who *antichrist* is, and is delighted that we have been blinded to the truth. And we can be assured; that very truth is something regarding which we must seek revelation from the Holy Spirit.

It is probable that very few would deny that we live in fearful times. The breakneck speed of the decline we have been witnessing has garnered the attention of nations around the world. But what is this realization doing in the minds of the peoples of the earth? Is there an awakening to the fact that we cannot remain as we are--without hope in this topsy-turvy world? Is there even a glimmer of realization that Someone is waiting for us to acknowledge Him, so that if our lives come crashing down around us we have a steadfast hope that is firmly centered in Christ Jesus whose Life has become our Life? Is there a safe haven? Yes, but what is the cost?

Before we get to the essence of the message regarding the *antichrist Christian*, let's look at how the enemy's plan was put in place thousands of years ago.

Lucifer

The Hebrew word *heylel* means "(in the sense of *brightness*); the *morning star*." The King James Bible translators used "Lucifer" in translation of *heylel*, in Isaiah 14, to describe the beautiful creature that once held a prominent place among all the other heavenly angels. That was, until pride and self-exaltation caused him to say in his heart "***I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.***" (Isaiah 14:13-14 RV) As the 12th verse tells us, he had *fallen from heaven* and been *cut down to the ground* because he *layed low* [weakened] *the nations*. Because of the declarations he had made **in his heart**, he would *be brought down to hell, to the uttermost parts of the pit*.

Notice how Satan did not speak aloud his intent to become like *the most High*. He simply "**said in his heart**" what his desire was. Our omnipresent God knows even the thoughts of our hearts; just as He did Satan's thoughts.

As we know, Satan, having been *cut down to the ground* appeared in the form of a serpent in the Garden of Eden. He was now hell-bent on revenge against God, and used his deceptive powers to seduce Eve (and ultimately Adam) into eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan had failed at rising to the heights he so desired. And now was his opportunity to cause man to become *as God, knowing good and evil*.

Man's aspiration to be *as God* resulted in his being expelled from the Garden and the presence of his Creator. As the Lord God had said, man *died*. His spiritual life had been lost; *self* became enthroned, and with his knowledge of good and evil man would live a life of self-exaltation, in opposition to the God in whose image he had been created. As

David said in Psalm 68:4, ". . . his name is JAH." He is the *Self-existent One*, as we see in the meaning of the Name *Jah*. For man to exalt his own *self* in any way is to oppose the only true *Self-existent One*.

In the beginning, during man's time in the Garden of Eden, there was only the Creator and His creation, man, with whom He had perfect communion. In the end, when time is no more, there will be only Jesus, the Re-Creator, having perfect communion with those who are His very own. All the things created by mortal man will no longer exist; the things we have strived to build and amass for our comfort will be gone--worthless. All the things we did in the strength of flesh, believing we were pleasing God, will be meaningless when we come face to face with Jesus. All of our striving to *look good* to others will result in our hearing these words from His lips: "Depart from me; I never knew you!"

Only the immortal God is able to create the Eternal. There will be no more churches--only re-created man and God, as one for eternity. If we were to 'drill down' through the layers of the things of this life, we would discover that, ultimately, the only thing remaining is man. Messiah came to redeem and dwell in the individuals whom He created for Himself. Gone forever will be *self*, and man's *self will*, which is the driving force in mortal flesh.

The work of God

In Luke, chapter 10 we read of the seventy chosen by Jesus to go out and minister. After a time they returned, joyful, "*saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in your name.*" Jesus replied to them, "***I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you. Howbeit in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.***" (Luke 10:18-20)

It was Jesus' power that went with the seventy, making *their ministry* a success. And Jesus was quick to point out that He had witnessed Satan's fall to earth because of a quest for power and authority. Knowing Him was of greater importance than exercising power and authority over Satan's demonic crowd. Do we understand what He is saying here? Do we 'get it' that the things we do *in His Name* are of lesser significance than our relationship with Him? Are we *opposing Messiah* through our deeds, falling into pride because, as the seventy did, we see how effective *our ministry* is?

This brings to mind the passage where Jesus was asked the question, "*What must we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom he has sent.***" (John 6:28b-29) Trust in Christ IS the work of God--not anything we do, even in obedience to Him. Our obedience is part of our relationship of surrender to Him. The work is His, and He WILL accomplish it. The danger for us is always that we might become *self-important* as we live in this body of flesh. Jesus crucified flesh on our behalf to reconcile us to God. The

only thing standing between us and God is our filthy flesh, rooted in sinful *self*, which we too easily refuse to surrender to Him. The Spirit of Christ raised Him from the dead after He willingly gave up the 'ghost'. We must be willing to give up the 'ghost' of our life of *self* and flesh, so that the Spirit of Christ can return life to our 'dead' bodies. As Paul so aptly said, "*They that are in the flesh cannot please God.*" (Romans 8:8)

The *antichrist Christian* is one who believes he is born again but lives his life as though the flesh were everything. But as the above verse said, he can never please God--no matter how hard he tries. The truth of the matter is this: "*Wherefore if any man is **in Christ**, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.*" (2 Corinthians 5:17) Why? Because "***you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.***" (Colossians 3:3) Now ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what this 4th verse means. "*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory.*" It is the Lord's will that we know the mystery of the gospel.

To [the saints] whom God willed to make known what are the riches [Greek: 'valuable *bestowment*'] of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is **Christ in you, the hope** [Greek: 'expectation'] **of glory**; whom we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect [Greek: 'complete'] **in Christ Jesus**; for which I also labor, striving according to His working which is working **in me** with power. Colossians 1:27-29 EMTV

The temple of God

The New Testament is very clear when it tells us the *temple of God* is not a building. So, with that in mind, there is no question that the *temple of God*, referred to in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, is not a building. It is the place where Christ desires to dwell--in man, to make him a new creature. What more intimate fellowship could we have with the living God, if not with Him dwelling inside of us? These two passages in Acts are powerful.

Howbeit the Most High **does not dwell in houses made with hands**; as the prophet said, The heaven is my throne, and the earth the footstool of my feet: what manner of house will you build me? saith the Lord: Or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things? You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, **you always resist the Holy Ghost: just as your fathers did.** Act 7:48-51

The God who made the world and all the things in it, Him being Lord of heaven and earth, **does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, nor by the hands of men is He served**, as though He needed anything, for He gives to all life, and breath, with respect to all things. And He made from one blood every nation of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth, and He ordained their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, in order for them to seek the Lord, if perhaps indeed they might grope for Him and find Him, and yet

being indeed not far from each one of us; for **in Him we live and move and have our being.** . . . Act 17:24-28a EMTV

Only He can make His temple, and only He has a right to dwell in that temple. "*Know you not that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*" (1 Corinthians 3:16)

Flesh versus Spirit

In Moses' Law, Israel was instructed to not eat blood. If anyone did, he would be cut off from among God's people. Why? "*For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.*" (Leviticus 17:11)

Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh so that He could pour out His blood, putting flesh to death on our behalf. He was the one pure Lamb. He shed His own blood to make atonement for man. He did His part, and now He asks that we put our complete trust in Him, allowing Him to live His life in and through us. "*And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, because **He abides with you and shall be in you.***" (John 14:16-17 EMTV)

Faith is relying on the One who dwells within us, to live His life through us. He is constantly at work 'renovating' His abode, bringing death to every area of *self* that is surrendered to Him moment by moment. The 'renovating' never stops. The Spirit of Grace continues His work of regeneration. Paul said, "*Where sin abounds [increases], Grace does much more abound [increase].*" (Romans 5:20) Hallelujah!

The Grace of God, in the person of the Holy Spirit of Christ, desires to accomplish His work in all who name the Name of Christ. But do all surrender to His working? Or is our flesh 'lusting against the Spirit,' while the Spirit 'lusts against the flesh?' (Galatians 5:17) The definition of the Greek word for *lust* is "to set the heart upon." This tells us that the flesh resists [sets the heart against] the Spirit. How many resist Him, opposing the very thing Messiah came to do?

Who is opposing Messiah and why?

There is grave danger in pursuing our own way, living what we *think* is the Christian life because some apostate preacher or pastor said it was the path to take. The Bible is trustworthy and the Holy Spirit is the only credible witness to truth.

Religious flesh is still flesh; in fact, it is the worst kind of flesh. As Paul said in his epistle to the Romans, "*But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*" (Romans 8:9-10)

In ignorance, many believe they are Christians because they said the "sinner's prayer" and were told they were now "born again." They read the Bible as though it were a book of promises for blessing, or a book of rules by which to live; albeit in their flesh. They have exalted *self* through "good behavior" to the level of a "good Christian." In truth, the *antichrist Christian* is one who refuses to humble himself under the mighty hand of God. "*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. . .*" (1 Peter 5:6)

Believing that God is there to shower only good things on His people, the *antichrist Christian* seeks the gifts rather than the Giver who desires to give Himself to them as their Life, if only they would surrender *self* to Him.

The *antichrist Christian* is pleased to show outwardly, for the benefit of others, that he has forsaken the obvious, outward 'sins,' while inwardly he resists the call to forsake **all** of *self*.

The *antichrist Christian* desires his 'best life now,' all the while being oblivious to the fact that Jesus never once promised prosperity here and now. He promised His own Life in abundance, and His Grace to keep us and prepare us for eternity with Him. (John 10:10)

The *antichrist Christian* prays according to the lusts of the flesh. He will pray self-centered prayers; prayers in sympathy with another; prayers for relief from affliction in the flesh--while God may be afflicting his flesh in order to 'kill' it. James said, "*You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.*" (James 4:3) We need to be pouring out our hearts to God for His will to be done in earth as it is in heaven. Only He knows His perfect will for us. "*For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searches the hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*" (Romans 8:26-27)

The *antichrist Christian* only sees the faults in others, while using 'rose-colored glasses' to look at his own [*self*-]righteousness. He firmly believes in the 'virtues' in himself that only he can 'see.' They are not quite as evident to everyone because they are not true virtues; they are a part of the façade he hides behind. He may have heard of "self-abandonment" and believes he has 'worked through' and accomplished it on his own. But as a writer of long ago said, "*Self-abandonment is not accomplished by means of painful reflections and continual struggles; it is only by refraining from self-contemplation, and from desiring to master ourselves in our own way, that we lose ourselves in God.*" ~ Francois de Fenelon (1651-1715)

In every *antichrist Christian* can be found the words "I will" prominently displayed in his personal vocabulary. Though ignorant of their existence and their blatantly opposing effect on the One he claims to love and serve, the root of "I will" can be traced back to

Lucifer. Like Lucifer, the *antichrist Christian* may simply purpose in his heart, saying "I will," but God knows our hearts.

If our desire is to follow Christ, we must be willing to go all the way, as He did. When facing His death on the cross, He said, "*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless **not my will, but thine, be done.***" (Luke 22:42)

The choice

The word *antichrist* is found exclusively in John's epistles, and in no other place; not even in the book of Revelation which was also written by John. If we read John's First and Second epistles, as with any letter, it would become evident that *antichrist* is not what it has become today. To whet your appetite, read this:

And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment [that we love one another], even as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. For many deceivers [Greek: 'misleaders'] are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. **This is the deceiver and the antichrist.** Look to yourselves, that you lose not the things which we have wrought, but that you receive a full reward. Whosoever goes onward and abides not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abides in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. 2 John 1:6-9

The idea that "the Antichrist" is some man, somewhere in the future--not present in the now--is one of the greatest deceptions. It is a myth that has been eagerly embraced by creatures of flesh who have not received revelation that *antichrist* is firmly seated in *self*.

The man of sin, the son of perdition is not some future tyrant--he is the antichrist Christian, ruled by the antichrist spirit to keep him from dying to *self*. The falling away (apostasy) of which Paul wrote has taken place, and *self* has become enthroned in the lives of Christians, now more than ever. There is a deep need for *death to self* to become a reality for all who call themselves Christians. Jesus said so clearly, "*If any man would come after me, let him deny [Greek: 'disown'] himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.*" (Matthew 16:24b-25)

Are we so enamored with *self* and the efforts of our flesh that we will deny Jesus His rightful place in us? Is the façade of a *Christian* life we have erected so treasured that we would risk losing our eternal life with Him? As John said, "*He is antichrist, that denies the Father and the Son.*" (1 John 2:22b)

The choice is simple--we either deny *self* or we deny Christ. "*But whoever denies [Greek: 'rejects'] Me before men, I also will deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*" (Matthew 10:33 EMTV)

www.ekklesia4him.net