The Biblical Identity of Antichrist
Part 2

8. His Rise Out of Obscurity
Daniel 7:8 (NASB95)
"While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts."

Antichrist is described as a "little horn" who rises from obscurity to a place of prominence (Daniel 7:8). This evil ruler doesn't suddenly appear in his true character and assume leadership over the world. He begins his rise to power as a part of the ten-nation European coalition; he is the "little horn" that emerges from the ten horns (Dan. 7:24ff). He begins as a man of peace who "solves" the Arab/Israeli problem and proves himself to be a master politician. Gradually his evil designs are revealed, and at the middle of the seven-year period, he will break that covenant, claim world control, and set himself up as god (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thes. 2; Rev. 13; cf. Dan. 11:36-39).¹

Romans 9:17 (NASB95)
¹ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."

Exegeirō (raised... up) carries the idea of bringing forward or lifting up and was used of the rise of historical figures to positions of prominence. In the same way, He once raised Pharaoh to do His will, God will one day "raise up a shepherd [Antichrist] in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hoofs" (Zech. 11:16).²

9. His Revelation
The Antichrist and archenemy of the Savior first appears in Daniel 7:8. As Scripture depicts him, he has yet to openly and officially be revealed on the world's stage. For the believer it is important to understand the relevance of Antichrist’s revelation to three prophetic events: the apostasy (the abomination of desolation), the Day of the Lord, and the Rapture.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-7 (NASB95)
¹ Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

In 2 Thess. 2:6, the aorist tense of the verb translated revealed points to a definite time when this man will appear. It implies that he was previously present and known, but his act of apostasy, the abomination of desolation, will unveil his true evil identity; he will drop all pretense and the

previously hidden wickedness of his character will be fully disclosed. The Antichrist will be an atheist and reject all religions except the one he establishes when he declares himself "god." However, it is important to note that God and the Lord Jesus will not have appeared as his enemies until the time he is revealed.

In 2 Thess. 2:2-3, Paul informs his readers that Antichrist has not appeared, and his revelation is a necessary precursor to the Day of the Lord. Antichrist must appear and commit the ultimate act of apostasy, the abomination of desolation, before the Day of the Lord arrives. The basic meaning of apostasia (apostasy) is "revolt," or "rebellion." In its only other New Testament appearance it refers to forsaking the Law of Moses (Acts 21:21). The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, uses it three times to express rebellion against God (Josh. 22:22; 2 Chron. 29:19; Jer. 2:19). Thus, the word marks a deliberate defection from a formerly held religious position. Paul's use of the definite article reveals that he had in mind not a general flow or trend, but a specific, identifiable act of apostasy. The apostasy will be a blasphemous act of unprecedented magnitude.

The apostle identified the apostasy by naming the key character connected with it: the man of lawlessness. Understanding who that key person is a prerequisite to identifying the apostasy event. Paul declared, "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming" (2 Thess. 2:7-8).

Paul taught that the Day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first (2 Thess. 2:1-5). That is, the Day of the Lord will not come until "the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2 Thess. 2:3-4). The rise of Antichrist and his desecration of the temple (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt. 24:15) will precede the coming of the Day of the Lord.4

Out of all the precursors of the Day of the Lord (e.g., Joel 2:31; 3:14; Mal. 4:5), Paul pointed out that the apostasy will precede the Day of the Lord. And since the apostasy has not yet taken place, the Day of the Lord could not have arrived. But, Jesus warns His disciples of being misled at "the sign of [His] coming and of the end of the age." The first birth pang mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24 is a proliferation of false teachers, false prophets, and false religions. They will succeed in explaining away the signs so that people will not recognize that they point to the Day of the Lord. In Matthew 24:5 Jesus warned, "Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many."

The relevance of Antichrist's appearance to the Rapture is that Paul did not set a mid or post-tribulation date for the Rapture (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 1 Thess. 5:1). That is, he did not tell his readers that they would live to experience the apostasy and the unveiling of the man of lawlessness and then eventually the Day of the Lord.

It should be noted that as he did in 1 Thessalonians, Paul twice identified himself as the author of 2 Thessalonians (1:1; 3:17). Despite the clear statement of the inspired text, some have challenged Paul's authorship of 2 Thessalonians. Critics claim that there is a contradiction between the eschatological teaching of the two epistles. They argue that while 1 Thessalonians stresses the suddenness and unexpectedness of the Lord's return, 2 Thessalonians teaches that signs will precede it. But Paul had in mind two distinct phases of the Lord's return:

- 1 Thessalonians points out that the Rapture will come suddenly and unexpectedly.
- 2 Thessalonians, written to counter the false teaching that the Day of the Lord had already arrived, notes that a specific event will precede that Day. That event, the arrival and unveiling

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of the final Antichrist, does not prohibit the unexpectedness of the Day of the Lord. Despite its precursors, "the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2).  

Now in terms of the relevance of Antichrist’s appearance to the end times 1 Thess. 5:1 informs believers, “Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you.”  

The phrase the times (chronos) and the epochs (kairos) refers in a general sense to the end times (cf. Dan. 2:21; Acts 1:7). Though the two words may be used here in an overlapping sense, there is a subtle difference in meaning between them. Chronos refers to chronological time, to clock time or calendar time. Kairos, on the other hand, views time in terms of events, eras, or seasons, such as the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). Taken together, the two terms suggest that the Thessalonians were curious about the timing of the end-time events. That both nouns are plural indicates that many different time periods (cf. Dan. 7:25; 9:24-27; 12:7, 11, 12; Rev. 11:2-3; 13:5) and events make up the end times (e.g., the Rapture, the rise of Antichrist, the salvation of Israel, the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments, the Second Coming, the battle of Armageddon, the sheep and goat judgment, the binding of Satan, the millennial kingdom, the loosing of Satan and subsequent worldwide rebellion at the end of the Millennium, the Great White Throne judgment, and the new heavens and the new earth).  

Paul gave six specific exhortations to avoid about the end times. Believers must not be deceived, forgetful (2 Thess. 1), ignorant, unbelieving, insecure, or weak (2 Thess. 2).  

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5 MacArthur New Testament Commentary, – 1 & 2 Thessalonians  
6 MacArthur New Testament Commentary, – 1 & 2 Thessalonians
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Part 3

10. His Names

- “the little horn” Daniel 7:8, 24; 8:9
- “the prince who is to come” Daniel 9:26
- “the king who does as he pleases” Daniel 11:36-45
- “the abomination of desolation” Daniel 12:11 (cf. Matthew 24:15)
- “the son of destruction” 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (cf. John 17:12)
- “the man of lawlessness” 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9 (cf. Daniel 7:25)
- “the beast who comes out of the sea” Revelation 13:1 (cf. 11:7); 14:9; 19:19-21; 20:10
- “the foolish, worthless shepherd” (Zechariah 11:12-17)

11. His Description

The little horn Daniel 7:8, 24; 8:9 represents the last world ruler, the man called Antichrist. The Greek prefix anti can mean "against" and "instead of." The final world ruler will be both a counterfeit Christ and an enemy who is against Christ.

Antichrist is described as “the king who does as he pleases” Daniel 11:36-45; an evil ruler (king), a selfish and willful person, a spellbinding orator who will arrogantly exalt himself. According to Daniel, the Antichrist has to overcome the power of three other rulers to be able to do what he wants to do and what Satan has planned for him to do (Dan. 7:24).

Paul describes Antichrist as “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:3). Anomia (lawlessness) literally means "without law" (cf. 1 John 3:4). The title man of lawlessness has been identified with many different individuals, including Antiochus Epiphanes, Caligula, Nero, and in the last century, Hitler, Stalin, and others. But the close association of the man of lawlessness with the Day of the Lord rules out historical persons; otherwise, the Day of the Lord might have come centuries ago.

The man of lawlessness cannot be Satan, for he is distinguished from the devil in 2 Thess. 2:9. Nor can this be a reference to a principle of evil, for the text specifically identifies him as a man. He can be none other than Antichrist. Antichrist will be the consummate lawless one, a blasphemous sinner, who will live in open defiance of God’s law. He will surpass all previous evil dictators, both in the extent of his power and the evil of his person. He will be the most fiendish, wicked, powerful man ever to walk the earth.

Paul further described the man of lawlessness as the son of destruction (2 Thess. 2:3). The expression son of is a Hebraism indicating a close association, or of the same kind, just as a son shares his father’s nature. The Antichrist will be so completely devoted to the destruction of all that relates to God’s purpose and plan that he can be said to be destruction personified. He, however, belongs to destruction (apōleia; “ruin,” not “annihilation”) as the one to be destroyed. He is fixed for punishment and judgment; he is human trash for the garbage dump of hell.

Only one other individual in Scripture shares the dubious distinction of being named son of destruction: Judas (John 17:12; the NASB translates the same Greek phrase "son of perdition"). The title is thus reserved for the two vilest people in human history, controlled by Satan (John 13:2; Revelation 13:2) and guilty of the two most heinous acts of apostasy. Judas lived and ministered intimately with...
the incarnate Son of God for more than three years—a privilege granted to only eleven others. Yet after observing Jesus' sinless life, hearing His wisdom, and experiencing His divine power and gracious love, Judas betrayed Him. Amazingly, he was so much a son of destruction that the glories of Christ that softened the eleven hardened him.

Antichrist is further described as “the foolish, worthless shepherd” (Zech. 11:15-17). The word "foolish" doesn't mean "stupid" but "morally deficient, corrupt" because he doesn't receive God's truth. He's also called "a worthless (idle) shepherd," because he doesn't care for the sheep. Unlike the Good Shepherd, he doesn't seek the lost, care for the young, feed the flock, or heal the injured. All he does is slaughter the flock to feed himself! (See Ezek. 34).

Because Israel rejected their true Shepherd, Jesus Christ, they will one day blindly accept and obey the false shepherd (Antichrist) who will lead them astray. Those who reject the light inevitably accept the darkness. "I have come in My Father's name," said Jesus, "and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive" (John 5:43, NKJV).9

12. His Character and Personality

Scripture describes Antichrist as having "eyes like the eyes of a man," indicating his intelligence (Daniel 7:8). The mention of his eyes suggests that he has remarkable knowledge and skill in planning his exploits.10

He has "a mouth uttering great boasts," a reference to his oratorical skills and arrogant pride (Daniel 7:8). He will also be a man skilled in using words and able to promote himself so that people follow him (vv. 11, 25; Rev. 13:5-6). He will also blaspheme God and ultimately convince the unbelieving world that he is a god (2 Thes. 2:1-12). He will become the ruler of the world, and will control not only the economy and the religion, but also seek to change the times and the laws.11

Antichrist will be self-deifying Daniel 7:25; 11:36-39; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Rev. 13:14. After initially posing as the friend of religion (cf. Rev. 17:13), Antichrist will suddenly reveal his true nature when he commits blasphemy against God and opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship (cf. Rev. 13:15-16). Energized by Satan and aided by the false prophet, Antichrist will have immense power to successfully demand that the world worship him (cf. Rev. 13:1-17).

Satan, who has always longed to be worshiped (cf. Isa. 14:13-14), will fulfill that desire vicariously through the worship accorded Antichrist. Antichrist will exalt himself by taking his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. The temple, the symbol of God's presence, is the most fitting place for Satan to orchestrate the ultimate act of blasphemy—a wicked man displaying himself as being God.

This apostasy, to which Paul refers in 2 Thess. 2 and which Jesus called the "abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15), referring to Daniel's prophecy, will take place at the midpoint of the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27). It will initiate God's judgment on the world through Antichrist's reign of terror during the second half of the Tribulation. At the end of that three-and-a-half-year period, Christ will return in glory to destroy Antichrist's kingdom and all the ungodly. The Lord Jesus will cast him into the lake of fire along with his false prophet (Rev. 19:11-21).12 The apostasy, Antichrist's blasphemous self-deification and desecration of the Temple, is a unique, unmistakable event that precedes the Day

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of the Lord. Since that clearly has not happened, the Day of the Lord cannot have arrived. And it never will for believers.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Antichrist will seek universal worship} \textsuperscript{2} Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:4, 12; 19:20. The world's fascination with Antichrist will quickly become worship. He will encourage and demand that worship by "exalt[ing] himself above every so-called god or object of worship [by taking] his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2 Thess. 2:4). Not content with acclaim, Antichrist will seek adoration; not content with respect, he will require reverence; not content with being hailed and heralded, he will demand to be worshiped. Those who "did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10) will be deceived into worshiping him. That deception will be fostered by the Antichrist's associate, the false prophet, who "makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast [Antichrist], whose fatal wound was healed" (13:12).\textsuperscript{14}

Antichrist will show no interest in \"the desire of women\" (Daniel 11:37). Some have suggested that this could mean he will be a homosexual; at least he will be heterosexually celibate. Some believe this probability, along with many other features, such as his world power and influence, unequalled religious ecumenical power, claim to rule in the place of Christ, and seeking of worship, seals the fact that he will be a pope.\textsuperscript{15} Others suggest the phrase "desire of women" probably relates to Haggai 2:7, a title of the Messiah, for it was the desire of Jewish women to give birth to the promised Messiah.\textsuperscript{16} In other words, he will have no respect for the god loved by women. The fact that he has no regard for the one desired by women suggests he rejects the messianic hope of Israel. Perhaps many an Israelite woman had longingly wondered if she would become the mother of the coming Messiah, the nation’s Savior and King.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{17} Bible Knowledge Commentary