

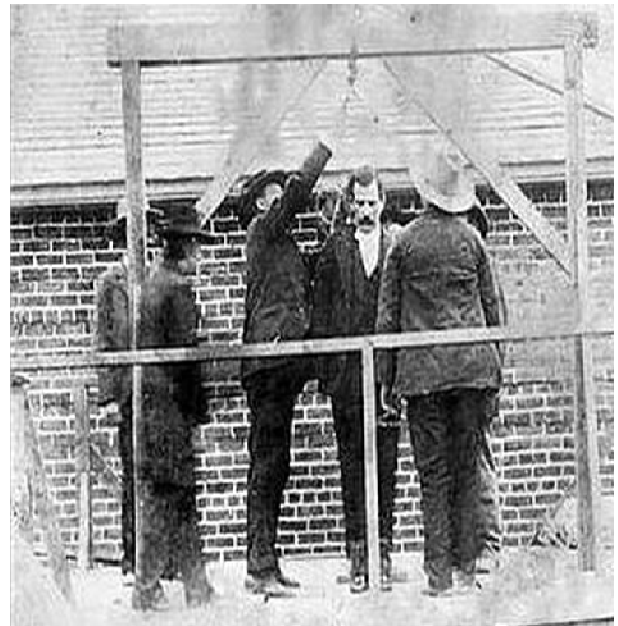
The Last Caesar

Antichrist and the Many Faces of Evil – Part IV

Revelation 13:1-2

Introduction

I received an e-mail that is more than likely an e-rumor, but it serves well the principle of spin-doctoring that has become so prevalent in our culture today. The story is of Judy Wallman, a professional genealogy researcher in southern California, who was doing some personal work on her own family tree. She discovered that Harry Reid's great-great uncle, Remus Reid, was hanged for horse stealing and train robbery in Montana in 1889. Judy and Harry Reid share this common ancestor. On the back of the picture Judy obtained during her research was this actual inscription: "Remus Reid, horse thief, was sent to [a U. S. government prison] in 1883, but escaped [and went on to rob] the Montana railroad six times. He was caught by Pinkerton detectives, convicted and hanged in 1889."



For fun, Judy Wallman e-mailed the photograph and the information to Congressman Harry Reid to tell him about his great-great uncle. The photograph shows Remus Reid on the gallows with men putting a noose around his neck.

Sometime later, Harry Reid's staff sent back a statement, tongue-in-cheek – having a little fun of their own – putting a spin on the story as only the political culture can. The following is their response:

Remus Reid was a famous cowboy in the Montana Territory. His business empire grew to include the acquisition of equestrian assets and dealings with the Montana railroad. In 1883, he devoted several years of his life to

government service, but took leave to resume his dealings with the railroad. In 1887, he was a key player in an investigation by the Pinkerton Detective Agency. In 1889, Remus passed away during an important civic function held in his honor . . . when the platform upon which he was standing suddenly collapsed.

How is that for spin?!

The truth is that we would also probably cover up the story if he were our great-great uncle.

It occurred to me that there is coming a time on planet Earth when spin-doctoring will reach levels never before achieved. It will not be tongue-in-cheek, it will be deadly serious.

The entire world will follow a man who captivates it by his smooth speech and winsome ways. There happens to be a coming leader who will mesmerize Europe and the coalition of European countries and then, the rest of the civilized world as he spins lies into something sounding like truths. He will eventually be worshiped as a god.

In reality this man is the incarnation of Satan's agenda; he is a murderer, a liar, and a cheat. He is the devil's messiah; he will be the proud prince of hell.

The world will be falling apart during the fury of God's wrath – and we have already studied this outpouring of wrath – but this man will still have the world convinced that he is in perfect control. And for a short period of time, after he rises to world power, he will be acclaimed as the Man of the Year, the miracle worker, the prince of peace, the savior of mankind.

The church has a title for this man that cuts to the chase – we call him, simply, “the antichrist”. He is the master spin-doctor.

Even the world is fascinated by this coming mesmerizer. Just Google the words, “the antichrist,” to find more than two million sites dedicated to some kind of prophecy, insight, vision, or speculation about this coming world leader.

One sect, living in a Mexican village that they have named the “New Jerusalem,” announced some time ago that the Pope was being held captive in the basement of the Vatican so that the antichrist could take over.ⁱ

I agree with one author who wrote that there has probably never been a time in the last two thousand years when people were not curious about the antichrist.ⁱⁱ

The title “antichrist” immediately provokes a response from most people. Even to the most biblically illiterate person in our culture, the term “antichrist” stands for something evil – they know it is a title that has bound up in it centuries of mystery, intrigue, and demonic power.

The Bible certainly is not silent about this man. There are more than two hundred passages that deal with the antichrist, including information about his nationality, his career, his character, and his tragic end.

Church leaders for centuries have expounded on the biblical passage related to the antichrist's brief rule on earth.

Irenaeus, the second century church leader, wrote extensively on the subject of the antichrist and even the meaning of the number 666.

A signature work on the antichrist was written by another church leader named Hippolytus around A.D. 200.

Tertullian also wrote about the antichrist as he battled against mysticism in the church during the third century.

I found it interesting that these men expected the antichrist to surface at any time.

Even John the apostle wrote in his first epistle that the antichrist was coming (I John 2:18).

By the way, the name “antichrist” is found only five times in the New Testament, and all of the references are in the letters of John the apostle.

The prefix “anti” (αντι) can be translated “against”. As the word then suggests, antichrist is anything or anyone against Christ. The prefix can also be translated “instead of”. Both meanings actually illustrate the agenda of the antichrist.

This man is both *against* Jesus Christ and all who follow the Lord, and he will also try to pass himself off as the true Christ; he will attempt to *replace* the true Messiah. Either way the prefix is translated, the *antichrist* will definitely live up to his horrible name!ⁱⁱⁱ

There are actually a number of additional titles for this coming deceiver. These include:

- the prince who is to come Daniel 9:26
- the fierce king Daniel 8:23
- a despicable man Daniel 11:21
- a worthless shepherd Zechariah 11:16
- the destroyer II Thess. 2:3

- a master of intrigue Daniel 8:23
- the evil man II Thess. 2:9

When John introduces us to the antichrist in the book of Revelation however, he always refers to him as a “beast”.

The word translated “beast” is from “therion” (θηριον) which can be translated “monster”. This is the monstrous person in whom the political power of the world is finally concentrated; this is the “man of sin” Paul speaks of in II Thessalonians 2:3.^{iv}

Now as John records the book of Revelation, the inspiring Spirit of God has led him first to give us a panoramic view of the wrath of God – which is poured out on the Earth after the church is raptured to heaven where we discover her singing the first hymns of heaven. Then, the wrath of God is poured out in the form of seals and trumpets, which we have studied at length.

Beginning with Revelation chapter 12, John changes the perspective for the Bible student to show the faces of evil involved during this seven year period – he reveals to us the key participants who will do the bidding of Satan during this time of Tribulation.

John begins in chapter 12 by introducing us to the first and foremost face of evil he called the “red dragon”. It is an unusual title for Satan himself; a title which depicts the unleashing of his ferocious, bloodthirsty pursuit of the Jewish people, as well as of the Jews and Gentiles who trust in Christ as their Messiah during the time of Tribulation.

So in chapter 12, we are shown Satan’s true nature. No more spin-doctoring on his desire; no more angel of light. He is the red dragon – the killer, the murderer, the deceiver and destroyer.

This is Satan’s evil passion. In chapter 13, we are about to be shown Satan’s evil prince.^v

In chapter 13, the mask will be taken off the smooth-talking, spin-doctoring leader and we will be shown what he really is – a demonically-inspired dictator.

When we combine Revelation chapter 13 with Daniel’s revelation in Daniel chapter 7, we are actually given enough information to know where he comes from, how he rises to power, what he wants to accomplish, and how he is empowered.

The Antichrist’s Associations

Now look at Revelation 13:1a.

And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. . . .

This is a reference to Satan, the antecedent to the opening phrase of this chapter. In fact, this first phrase in chapter 13 would be better serving as the closing phrase of chapter 12, where we are told in verse 17,

. . . the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore.

In Revelation 20, the sand of the seashore is used to speak of the nations of the world.

So in these verses, Satan is standing as ruler, so to speak, over the nations of the world.

However, this is not enough – he needs a physical body; he needs a man to do his bidding. Satan longs for one who will live and serve as anti-Christ!

Notice Revelation 13:1 – here this man comes.

. . . Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

Let us unpack this carefully.

This is very similar to John’s earlier description of Satan in chapter 12. The difference is that the diadems, or the royal crowns, are now on top of the ten horns. In other words, ten kings will be serving at the same time, under the direction of the antichrist. So, the title “beast” will refer to not only a man – the antichrist – but to his kingdom.

We do this same thing with Hitler’s name. Hitler stands for Nazi Germany and Nazi Germany stands for Hitler. We say that Hitler bombed London, when, in fact, Germany did. Hitler never flew a plane.

So in this verse, the title “beast” is interchangeably used to speak of the evil kingdom of Satan and the evil prince of Satan.

John informs us that there are “ten horns”. You may remember that horns are symbols for kings and kingly power. In other words, when the antichrist rises to power, there will be ten kings ruling together, forming a coalition of what Daniel reveals is a revival of the Roman Empire.

John's reference to "seven heads" is a reference to the culmination of the seven world empires that have ruled the known world.

It might help you to mark in the margin of your Bible above verse 1 the word "kings," and then, draw a line from that to the word "horns". Write the word "empires," and then, draw a line from that to the word "heads".

In Daniel chapter 7, we are told that the antichrist comes up among these ten horns, or ten kings, as a little horn – an eleventh king; an insignificant king. In other words, he begins among them as an insignificant leader. He does not start out as the president of the world's greatest super power and then move to Europe; he begins there in an insignificant role and grows in power and influence.

Daniel, in fact, informs us that this man eventually pulls three horns out by the roots; that is, he conquers three of the kings (Daniel 7:8). He subjugates the other kings, creating a united European empire that will follow his dictatorial rule.

Daniel describes this revived Roman Empire as one . . .

. . . which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. (Daniel 7:23)^{vi}

Notice the last descriptive phrase in verse 1 of Revelation 13.

. . . and on his heads were blasphemous names.

In other words, their primary purpose is to destroy the integrity and worship of the one true and living God.

John clearly reveals their blasphemy in Revelation chapter 17, verses 12-13.

The ten horns which you saw are ten kings . . .

These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

What is the one purpose of these kings? Notice verse 14a.

These will wage war against the Lamb . . .

The revived Roman Empire will shake its collective fist at Jesus Christ and all who follow Him.

The former emperors of Rome did much the same. Domitian, the emperor who exiled the apostle John, wore a gold crown engraved with the images of Rome's chief gods. His priests wore gold crowns as well, which were decorated with his own likeness.^{vii}

Every Roman emperor was called "divus," which means "divine". Nero had stamped on his coins, his title, "savior of the world". The later emperors even took the title "kurios," demanding to be called "Lord".^{viii}

Christians would die throughout the Roman Empire because they would refuse to offer the annual pinch of incense at a pagan altar, as prescribed by Roman law, and then, utter the oath, "Caesar is Lord."

Like these Roman emperors, this final Caesar, in this revived Roman Empire that will rule the world one day, will not only demand allegiance, he will demand worship.

People have been guessing who the antichrist is for centuries now, have they not?

We do not have to have much of an imagination to understand why the church in the 1930s and 40s concluded that Adolph Hitler was the perfect candidate. He grew up in Europe and was for years, an insignificant leader of sorts. However, he grew in power and influence until Germany lay at his feet. He claimed to be the champion of a new, superior race. It was not long before he was gobbling up European nations in a quest for world domination. Add to this the fact that he hated the Jews as well as Jesus Christ, and saw himself as the world's Messiah.

Hitler even boasted that just as Jesus Christ's birth had changed the calendar, so his victories would be the beginning of a new age. He actually said, "What Christ began, I will complete." At one of the Nuremberg rallies, a giant photograph of Hitler was displayed and it carried the caption, "In the beginning was the word."^{ix}

The ultimate and final antichrist will be crowned with blasphemy – he and his puppet kings in this coalition will fancy themselves more powerful than this Christian God whom they have obviously made so passé.

The Antichrist's Authority

Notice the way John describes this coming kingdom of the antichrist in verse 2 of Revelation 13.

And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

This verse is best understood with Daniel 7 as a commentary in which Daniel sees the coming of

world kingdoms, culminating in the final kingdom of antichrist.

The first kingdom was Babylon, seen as a lion with a ravenous appetite and terrifying presence.

The next kingdom was the bear – representing the Medo-Persian kingdom with its crushing claws and massive strength.

The leopard was Greece and it followed next, moving with swift speed to conquer the world. And in this way, Alexander the Great conquered the world so quickly, that as a young man he wept that there were no more worlds to conquer.^x

The final kingdom of the antichrist is described by Daniel as . . .

. . . dreadful and terrible and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. (Daniel 7:7)

In perfect unity, separated by six hundred years, Daniel and John both see a coalition of ten kings formed in Western Europe – the revived Roman Empire – ruled by the coming antichrist.

So, what have we been able to determine so far?

Five Observations about the Rise of the Last Caesar

Let us look at five observations about the rise of the last Caesar.

1. He will rise in influence from an insignificant political position; he will be a small king rising among the ten kings. (Daniel 7:8)
2. He will work his way into this ten king or country coalition and overthrow three rulers. (Daniel 7:20)
3. He will gain the loyalty of the remaining kings who will eventually allow him dictatorial rule. (Revelation 17:13)
4. His nationality will be, in general, European and more specifically, Roman. (Daniel 9:26-27 indicates that the antichrist will be of the same nationality as the people who destroy the Jewish temple. We know, of course, that Rome destroyed the Jewish temple under the direction of Titus.)
5. His rise to power will be marked by his ingenious Middle East solution. (Revelation 6:2; Daniel 9:27)

We have already studied this man's peace accord with Israel that allows safety, freedom, and the license to construct a new Temple in Jerusalem, which will be nothing short of miraculous.

By the way, peace which the antichrist brings to Israel may very well be an imposed peace. Daniel describes it as a "firm covenant" in Daniel 9:27. The Hebrew word that is translated "firm" can be translated "forced, or compelled". It is possible that the antichrist is in a position of power that offers Israel a "take it or leave it" peace plan.

The idea of an imposed peace on Israel by a confederation of Western nations does not take much of an imagination today, does it?^{xi}

Just read the newspapers and watch the news – there is one long battle for the land, and everyone is weary of it. Even now the United Nations is unable to keep peace in the Middle East.

Jimmy Carter thought he could bring peace to the Middle East. Ronald Reagan tried. Bill Clinton tried as well. The Bush administration tried and yet, it ended with missiles flying through the air above Gaza. Obama will give only one more attempt in a long line of failed cease fires and paper-thin peace treaties.

Henry Kissinger thought he would achieve this peace; Nixon tried, and so did Ford. Just name the presidency, the diplomat, the administration, the country's leader – no one on the planet has succeeded in giving the Middle East a peaceful solution, much less a Jewish temple on the Temple Mount.

However, in recent years, growing on the horizon of public awareness is the sight of unifying Western European nations. The European Union has suddenly surfaced and is now being hailed by many today as the restoration of the Roman Empire. It is currently twenty-seven nations strong.

This does not fit the model of inspired Revelation. Something has to happen for it to be carved into ten divisions – the word of God has not missed the mark by one number.

There is little doubt in my mind that what we see happening is the groundwork – the setting for the last Caesar.

This union has a parliament. It now has an elected president. CNN reported, "For the first time since the Roman Empire, a large portion of Europe now shares a common currency."

It is interesting that the ancient Roman Empire began as a republic with a democratically elected Senate and then regressed to rule by one man –

Caesar Augustus – the first Caesar to call himself Lord.^{xii}

History will repeat itself. The restored Roman Empire, which may very well be in the works today with its democratically elected parliament and president, will also one day regress to rule by one man – the antichrist – the last Caesar to call himself Lord.

Ladies and gentlemen, the next chapter can be written at any time. Peace in the Middle East will be the signature of the antichrist whereby he will amaze the world and cap his meteoric rise to power.

Arnold Toynbee, a British historian, wrote these interesting words decades ago, “By forcing on mankind more and more lethal weapons, and at the same time making the world more and more interdependent economically, we are ripe for the deification of any new Caesar who might succeed in giving the world unity and peace.”^{xiii}

Now be careful concerning this. Do not spend waking hours trying to determine if the antichrist is alive today or not; or whether he might be living in London or Greece or Spain or Rome.

We have already discovered that the antichrist will not be revealed until after the Rapture. Revelation 6 clearly informs us that his emergence with his peace plan for the Middle East will take place after the church is taken to the throne of God’s glorious heaven.

Before the Rapture, the antichrist is an insignificant small player in the European unification system. His formal introduction into the world scene as a player will occur after the church has been raptured to heaven.

The Spirit of the Antichrist

I personally believe that the enemy of the church would love for us to pinpoint some world leader as the antichrist, while at the same time failing to focus on something that seems to catch the church off guard in every generation – certainly in our generation. It is the spirit of antichrist.

The apostle John wrote that the spirit of antichrist was already at work – in the first century (I John 2:18). The spirit of antichrist has been alive in every century since.

The spirit of antichrist – that is, the Satanically engineered systems of our world that blaspheme the name of God, that oppose the work of Christ and His church, that attempt to drown out the truth of God’s word – is here. Stay alert to it!

John says, “The antichrist is coming one day, but even now the spirit of antichrist is at work.”

This is the spirit of twisting the truth; blaspheming God; corrupting one another; giving in to self-centered lust and greed; promoting lies as if they were the truth.

Have you spotted the lies in our own generation? Can you detect the spin-doctors in our world?

Try these on for size – they are being spun into the latest fashion of our own world today.

- What you do in private is nobody else’s business.
- Divorce doesn’t really hurt children; it prepares them to face life on their own.
- Marriage is the union of two loving partners, regardless of sexual orientation.
- Belief in moral absolutes is proud and unfair.
- If it’s legal, it’s acceptable.
- Telling someone they are sinners in need of forgiveness is hate speech.
- Sexual relations before marriage proves you love them.
- Truth is a relative term.
- It’s up to you to save planet Earth from destruction.
- Pride in one’s own self and one’s own accomplishments are part of a healthy self-image.
- You are a part of the universe – a piece of the divine.
- PG-13 means a movie is suitable for 13-year-olds.
- Bisexual experimentation is part of discovering the real you.
- All the wisdom you need is already within you.
- Abortion is the removal of fetal tissue.
- What you do in Vegas, will not follow you home.
- At 21, it is legally and socially acceptable to get drunk, as long as someone else drives you home.

Are you alert to the spin in your own world?

Are you alert to a lie that is parroted by enough people or some significant person that you believe the lie is actually the truth?

As we spend several sessions uncovering the clues about the coming antichrist, and the devastation he will bring with his lies and blasphemy, let us make sure we are alert to the spirit of antichrist that we might invite into our own lives, our own self-justification, our own thinking, our own planning.

I personally believe the rider of the white horse is about to mount up – any day – but this does not pose any danger for me or any other believer.

Listen to the challenge and warning of John the apostle. Make sure you do not allow the lies to gallop into your heart and mind while you wait for the Rapture and listen for the upward call of Jesus Christ who is the true Messiah.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 1/18/2009 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Mark Hitchcock, Is the Antichrist Alive Today? (Multnomah Books, 2002), p. 87.

ⁱⁱ Ibid., p. 7.

ⁱⁱⁱ David Jeremiah, What In the World Is Going On? (Thomas Nelson, 2008), p. 142.

^{iv} Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 840.

^v John Phillips, Exploring Revelation (Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), p. 162.

^{vi} John MacArthur, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 2000), p. 37.

^{vii} Mark W. Wilson, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Revelation (Zondervan, 2002), p. 82.

^{viii} William Barclay, The Revelation of John: Volume 2 (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 89.

^{ix} Jeremiah, p. 144.

^x Adrian Rogers, Unveiling the End Times In Our Time (Broadman, 2004), p. 154.

^{xi} Hitchcock, p. 41.

^{xii} Hitchcock, p. 34.

^{xiii} Rogers, p. 154.