



South Florida Avenue CHURCH OF CHRIST MESSENGER



1807 S. Florida Ave.,
Lakeland, FL 33803

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ELDERS

David Anderson
Brian Kenyon
Bobby Sheumaker

DEACONS

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Rick Kenyon
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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

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WHAT ABOUT "ANTICHRIST"?

Brian R. Kenyon

When studying the Book of Revelation, it is amazing how many commentators refer to the beast (who takes orders from the dragon) as "The Antichrist." It might surprise some to know that the term "antichrist" does not even appear in the Book of Revelation! While it is true that all God's enemies have some things in common (i.e., pride, rebellion, etc.), similarity does not mean sameness (Isa. 14:12-14 cf. II Thes. 2:3-4)! We must allow the Bible to define its terms. In this article, we will examine the term "antichrist" and how it is used in the Bible.

UNDERSTANDING GNOSTICISM

The Epistles of John were written under the backdrop of "incipient [initial stage of] Gnosticism." (This section explaining Gnosticism is adapted from Cairns 96-98.) Gnosticism was the greatest philosophical threat to early Christianity, reaching its peak of power around AD 150. "Incipient" Gnosticism seems to be addressed in the New Testament (cf. Col. 2:8-9, 18-23; 1 Jn. 1:1-3). Tradition attributes the origin of Gnosticism to Simon Magus, whom it is said that Peter had to rebuke severely.

Gnosticism sprang up from an attempt to explain the origin of evil. Gnostics assumed that all physical matter was associated with evil. They sought a way to create a philosophical system in which God as total Spirit could be freed from association with evil and in which man could be related on the spiritual side of his nature to Deity. They sought to answer great questions surrounding man's origin by synthesizing Christianity and Greek philosophy. Dualism was one of their main tenets. They insisted upon a clear separation of the material world and the spiritual world (because, in their mind, matter was always evil). God, therefore, could not have been Creator of this material world.

"Docetism" is the doctrine they developed to explain Christ. Because all matter was to be associated with evil, Christ as absolute spirit could not be associated with a human body. Either the man Jesus was a phantom with the seeming appearance of a material body (Docetism), or Christ came upon the human body of Jesus only for a short time. They claimed the Christ-spirit came upon the body of Jesus at His baptism, and the Christ-spirit departed from the body of Jesus on the cross. It was the task of Christ to teach a special "gnosis" (knowledge) that would help man to save himself by an intellectual process.

Salvation, which was only for the spiritual part of humans, required special "gnosis," which Christ only imparted to the elite. Since the body was material and destined to be cast off, it might be kept under by strict ascetic practices or be given over to "libertinism" (complete freedom to do anything one desires). There is no place for the bodily resurrection according to Gnosticism. The Lord's Supper was not observed because it involved fruit of the vine and bread, which were considered evil because they were material. A casual reading of Irenaeus'

Against Heresies will reveal that there were many groups of Gnosticism and that their doctrines varied. Marcion and his followers seem to have been the most influential group of Gnostics.

Gnosticism is a damnable doctrine because of its implications. First, it places two gods in complete opposition to one another: the evil “god” of the Old Testament to create the material world, and the good “god” of the New Testament to redeem. Second, it rejects Christ’s humanity, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection. John’s writings refute much of incipient Gnosticism. So also does Paul’s letter to the Colossians (Col. 1:19; 2:9). Third, it promotes spiritual pride by its doctrine that only an aristocratic elite can be blessed eternally because only they are privileged to receive the special knowledge necessary. Fourth, it has no place for the human body (which will be changed, I Cor. 15:51-56) in the future life. Fifth, its asceticism was a contributing factor to the medieval ascetic movement known as monasticism (cf. Col. 2:20-23).

ANTICHRIST

The word “antichrist” (from *antichristos*, ἀντίχριστος) occurs only five times in four Bible verses:

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. (1 John 2:18)

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22)

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:3)

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (2 John 7)

When these passages are considered, the following emerges: (1) Antichrist was characteristic of the “last time” (1 John 2:18a), which does not necessarily refer to the end of time, immediately prior to the final judgment day (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-6). (2) Antichrist was one of many other “antichrists” (1 John 2:18b). The idea of “The Antichrist” is foreign to Scripture! The King James Version does not even use the word “the” in describing an antichrist! (3) Antichrist was a liar, one who denied the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22). In that sense, an antichrist was of the devil (cf. John 8:44). This characteristic is more meaningful given the context of incipient Gnosticism. (4) Antichrist was one who would not acknowledge that Jesus had come in the flesh (1 John 4:3a). (5) Antichrist was already in the world when John wrote (1 John 4:3b). (6) Antichrist was a deceiver who does not confesses that Jesus had come in the flesh (2 John 7).

CONCLUSION

This simple Biblical description is quite different from far-fetched denominational descriptions (such as Hindson 1291). They usually equate this “antichrist” with one, or more, or all of the following: (1) the “abomination of desolation” (Mt. 24:15 cf. Dan. 9:27; 12:11); (2) the “man of sin,” or the “wicked one” (2 Thes. 2:3, 8); or (3) the “beast” (Rev. 13:1). Their assumptions are unfounded and also involve many other accompanying errors.

WORKS CITED

Cairns, Earle E. *Christianity Through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*. 3rd rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

Hindson, Edward. “The Antichrist.” *Prophecy Study Bible*. Ed. Tim LaHaye. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000.



HAPPY CAMPERS! Special thanks to Kyle and all his coworkers for directing last week at Central Florida Bible Camp. The kids and grown-ups had a great time learning about Jesus and the fact that we are of royal value to Him (Gen. 1:26-27).

PRAYER LIST

Current: Jim Turner will be having a pacemaker inserted July 7. Barbara Shanes (niece of Jeanelle Thrower) has terminal cancer, Gene Bowls will have a heart procedure on Friday, Leah Lobhan is home with the flu.

Continual: Wayne Shearer has started Chemotherapy; Melissa Craft (health); Declan Potvin (eye); Marissa Estridge (knee surgery); Debbie Bush (struggles); Brian Smith (heart health); Antoine & Marcella Swain (health); Geny Johnson (health); Bill & Carlene Long (health & strength); Ron & Judy Ford (health); Bobby Simpson (health); Annett Phillip (health); Janie Wise (health); Jim Turner (health); Margaret Coone (health); Kathy Nester (health); Melody Baxter (health)

Shut-ins: Joyce Burbage, Carol Eason, Kenny & Reba French
Extended family and Friend are Emailed Weekly

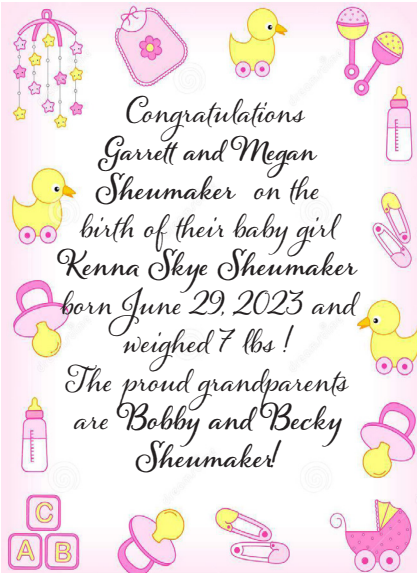
"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16

COOKOUT!

BRING YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY AND JOIN US FOR FUN, FELLOWSHIP AND FOOD!

WE WILL HAVE A COOKOUT AND WATER ACTIVITIES FOR THE KIDS! Games begin at 2:00 pm and food will be served at 5:00 pm

****Bring side dishes, desserts and drinks to share!**
SATURDAY, JULY 8 AT SFA



TEEN RECHARGE
 WWCC 2023

Investigating the reality of the resurrection
 It really happened In Real Life!
 August 4-6
 For ages 12-18
 Register before July 20 to guarantee a t-shirt
 Register at <https://forms.gle/pkSTwZfRw5x2YPhU9>
 If you have any questions, please contact Vince Daugherty (740) 801-1106 or email vdaughero81013@gamil.com

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

July Designated Elder - Bobby Sheumaker

Wednesday, July 5, 2023

Announcements.....Bobby Sheumaker
 Song Leader/prayer.....David Williams
 DevotionalVince Daugherty
 PrayerPaul Sweeney

Sunday, July 9, 2023

10:30 A.M.

Sermon.....Vince Daugherty
 "Yes the Walls Came Tumbling Down" (Jos. 6)

6:00 P.M.

Sermon.....Rick Kenyon

Those to Serve

10:30 A.M.

Song/Prayer before class.....Tucker Sweeney
 Song Leader (both services).....Brian Kenyon
 Announcements(both)Frank Hamby
 Scripture reading/Prayer.....Brian Williams
 Lord's Table (both).....Lou VanAllen
 Closing Prayer.....George Bealls
 Open/Close bldg (both).....David Anderson
 Greeters.....The Fife's
 Attendance cards (both).....Sawyer/Klark
 Sound Booth (both).....Kyle Bingle

6:00 P.M.

P.M. Song LeaderBrian Kenyon
 Scripture reading/PrayerTerrance Dindy
 Closing PrayerJosh Potvin
 Greeters PM.....Shearers

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

Announcements.....Tyler Anderson
 Song Leader/prayer.....Andre Medley
 DevotionalTucker Sweeney
 PrayerWadi Khoury

Upcoming Events 2023

July

- 8 Cookout and Games at SFA
- 8 Family/Friends Day at North Lakeland
- 11 FSOP Ladies Class @ 7:00 pm
- 29 Orange St VBS 9:00 am-?

August

- 4-6 Teen Recharge Retreat WWCC
- 5 VBS North Lakeland 9:30 am
- 5 Baby Shower for Heidi (Bingle) Rhymes
- 5 VBS Pinecastle church of Christ

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

June 18.....	\$5,265.00
June 25.....	\$5,501.00
July 02.....	\$6,019.00
Contribution Average.....	\$7,056.67
Weekly budget	\$7,410.00

Walk The Talk

If you're going to talk the talk, you've got to walk the walk! All show and no go! Actions speak louder than words! These are different ways to say, Walk the Talk. We will have a greater influence on people if we practice what we preach.

A Christian's life demonstrates if he/she is a true disciple or just a talker. Do we want to spend eternity in heaven with God? Are we living a life that will lead us to heaven? Even though we are saved by grace—Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God." —there should be actions that demonstrate our faith in God—James 2:18-20, "But someone will say, you have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble. But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" Read also verses 21-26.

Check out Hebrews 11 for a list of people who walked the talk by demonstrating their faith in God. Let us encourage each other as we strive to walk the talk. (Gal. 6:8-10)

Matthew 7:21 warns, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven."

YOUTH SECTION

Lessons from 11 Timothy

Vessel for Use of the Master (II Tim. 2:20,21)

I remember growing up, one chore my brother and I had to help with was doing the dishes. However, every once in a while we got a reprieve from our duties. The special night was when mom would serve guests on the special china set from the hutch. These were the nice plates and silverware. They were not used all the time like the common plates and silverware. These were special; they were in pristine condition, no cracks or chips. Not like the common plates and silverware, it would not matter if two rambunctious boys washed and dried them. If the common dishes were scratched, cracked, or shattered it was not a big deal. But the nice china, that had to be handled with special care. It makes me think of how Paul saw individuals who were useful for the ministry. He said, "in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor." Some individuals God views as that fine china, separated for special work. God gives us the opportunity to be part of the special vessels. "if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." So the real question is, what kind of vessel are you? Common ordinary not ready for good works; or a special vessel prepared for every good work for the Master of the house? - VD



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South Florida Avenue CHURCH OF CHRIST

1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

*"It is God who arms me with
strength. And makes my way
perfect."*

Psalm 18:32



If you prefer to receive the bulletin via email, contact us.