The Singular Concept of “The Antichrist”

Understanding TERM Antichrist in Epistles of John

In 1 John 2:18, the verse reads:
“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.”

The Greek word for “time” here is **ὥρα** (*hora*), translated as “hour” or “season” in other contexts. This suggests not only a specific moment but also an era or season—particularly, an appointed time for something to take place.

First-Century vs. Futurist Interpretation

In this passage, the phrase **“it is the last time”** points to the urgency and finality of the age in which John was writing. Early Christians, particularly in the first century, believed they were living in the “last days” or the “end of the age,” a period preceding the full establishment of God’s kingdom through Christ’s second coming. The **“last time”** in John’s writings seems to refer to the current era (in John’s view), where the manifestation of false teachers or figures opposing Christ (antichrists) would mark this period.

John does not treat the “antichrist” as a singular figure in this verse. Rather, he says, **“even now are there many antichrists.”** This supports the idea that “antichrist” here is a broader term for those who deny Christ, rather than a single individual. The **plurality** of antichrists indicates that this opposition was already manifesting in the first century. It suggests a **present reality** for John’s audience, rather than a

future-only figure confined to a tribulation period.

Theological Breakdown: Antichrist and Its Popularization

The epistles of John mention “antichrist” five times:

1. 1 John 2:18 – *“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.”*
2. 1 John 2:22 – *“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is **antichrist**, that denieth the Father and the Son.”*
3. 1 John 4:3 – *“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**…”*
4. 2 John 1:7 – *“…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.**“*

In all these instances, John refers to an antichrist spirit or multiple figures who oppose Christ, particularly by denying His incarnation and role as the Messiah. Nowhere in these epistles does John frame “the antichrist” as a future, singular person. The idea that “antichrist” refers to anyone who denies Christ’s divinity or teachings supports the notion that it’s a **spiritual condition** or force present even in the first century.

Development of a Singular Antichrist in Futurist Theology

The idea of a **singular Antichrist figure** during a final, climactic period of history gained prominence within **futurist eschatology**, particularly through **dispensationalism**, which was

systematized in the 19th century by figures such as **John Nelson Darby** and popularized through the **Scofield Reference Bible** by **C.I. Scofield**. In this framework, a seven-year period of **tribulation** is interpreted as the final era of human history before Christ's return, during which a **singular Antichrist figure** rises to power, deceives the nations, and opposes God. Several key biblical texts are used to support this view:

1. Daniel 9:27

"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

This verse is part of Daniel's prophecy of the **Seventy Weeks** (Daniel 9:24-27), which futurists interpret as referring to future events. The **"he"** in Daniel 9:27 is often seen by futurists as the Antichrist, a powerful world leader who will make a **covenant with many** (interpreted as Israel or other nations) for "one week" (understood as seven years), but will **break the covenant halfway through** by causing sacrifices to cease and setting up the **abomination of desolation** in the temple.

- Futurists argue that this verse describes a **future Antichrist** who will appear during the seven-year tribulation, breaking his treaty with Israel in the middle of that period, leading to the desecration of the temple and the persecution of believers. The phrase **"abomination of desolation"** is seen as a direct action by this individual, connecting him to the evil end-times figure prophesied in other texts.

2. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

Here, Paul warns the Thessalonian church that the **Day of the Lord** (the final return of Christ) will not happen until two things occur: a **great apostasy** (falling away from the faith) and the revelation of the **"man of sin"** or **"son of perdition."**

- Futurists interpret this "man of sin" as the **Antichrist**, a single figure who will exalt himself above God and take his seat in the **temple of God**, claiming divinity. This is seen as a future event during the tribulation, when this individual will deceive many, performing false signs and wonders to establish his authority.
- The connection between the **man of sin** and the Antichrist stems from the language of this passage, which describes someone who **opposes God** and tries to usurp His place—a description that parallels the **Antichrist figure** in futurist interpretations of **Revelation 13**.

3. Revelation 13:1-8

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy… And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority… And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

In **Revelation 13**, the **“beast”** is a central figure in John’s apocalyptic vision, often understood by futurists as the **Antichrist**. The beast rises from the sea, symbolizing chaos or the nations, and is given authority by the **dragon** (Satan). The beast blasphemes God, wages war against the saints, and is worshiped by those who reject Christ.

- The imagery of the **beast** is interpreted as a **future world leader** who will rule over a global empire, backed by Satan, and will demand worship from the inhabitants of the earth. Many believe that this figure is the same as the **“man of sin”** in 2 Thessalonians 2 and the **one who confirms the covenant** in Daniel 9:27, thereby identifying him as the **Antichrist**.

Why These Verses Seem to Connect to a Singular Antichrist

The connections between these texts and a **singular Antichrist** are drawn primarily from the following observations:

1. **Daniel 9:27** is believed to prophesy a future event where a leader (interpreted as the Antichrist) makes and then breaks a covenant, leading to abominable actions in the temple, which parallels the **blasphemous** actions described in **Revelation 13**.
2. **2 Thessalonians 2** describes a **man of sin** who will exalt himself in God’s temple and demand worship, which echoes the **beast** in Revelation who receives worship and acts with **Satanic authority**.
3. **Revelation 13** introduces a single figure (the beast) who exercises **worldwide political and religious power**, which is seen as the climactic figure of evil at the end of the age, corresponding with the **Antichrist** in both **Daniel** and **Thessalonians**.

In summary, futurist theologians interpret these passages together as referring to a **future world leader**—the **Antichrist**—who will arise during a **seven-year tribulation** period, oppose God, and deceive the nations. Although the term "Antichrist" is never explicitly used in these passages, the **characteristics of rebellion**, **opposition to God**, and **demand for worship** are seen as qualities associated with the Antichrist figure. This interpretation fits into the broader dispensationalist framework of a **literal, future fulfillment** of these prophecies, culminating in a singular, end-times Antichrist.

See additional post **HERE** about the *Antichrist*.

Comparing Futurist vs. Covenantal Eschatology

1. Hermeneutical Approach:

- **Futurist**: Futurists emphasize a **literal** and **chronological** reading of apocalyptic texts, especially in books like Daniel, 2 Thessalonians, and Revelation. They believe these texts predict specific future events, including the rise of a **singular Antichrist**, a seven-year **tribulation**, and a future **millennial kingdom** on earth. This is rooted in **dispensationalism**, which views history as divided into distinct periods where God interacts with humanity in different ways. Futurists often claim that prophecies fulfilled literally in Christ's first coming (e.g., Isaiah 53) suggest that future prophecies (e.g., those about the Antichrist) should also be understood literally.
- **Covenantal**: In contrast, covenantal theology views the Bible through the lens of **God's unfolding covenantal**

relationship with His people—from Old Testament Israel to the New Testament Church. Covenant theology tends to emphasize the **Christ-centered** fulfillment of prophecy rather than a literalistic future fulfillment. Prophecies about the "end times" are often interpreted symbolically or as **already fulfilled in history** (e.g., in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.) rather than as future events waiting to occur. The **focus is on the Church** as the true inheritor of God's promises, viewing eschatology as the culmination of God's redemptive work through Christ.

2. View on the Antichrist:

- **Futurist**: As described earlier, futurists typically interpret the **Antichrist** as a **future world leader** who will arise during a seven-year **tribulation**. This figure will make a covenant with Israel, break it halfway through, and set up the **abomination of desolation** in the rebuilt temple (Daniel 9:27), oppose Christ, and deceive many. This figure is closely connected with the **beast** in Revelation 13 and the **man of sin** in 2 Thessalonians 2.
- **Covenantal**: From a covenantal perspective, the term "antichrist" in the **epistles of John** is understood to refer to anyone who **opposes Christ** or denies His divinity (1 John 2:22). Covenant theologians typically reject the idea of a **future, singular Antichrist** figure. Instead, they see the "man of sin" or "beast" in Revelation as representative of forces of evil or **tyrannical powers**—often identified historically with the **Roman Empire** or other historical figures like **Nero**. The spirit of antichrist is seen as a **recurring phenomenon** throughout history, rather than a one-time individual in the future.

3. Fulfillment of Prophecy:

- **Futurist**: Futurists interpret Daniel's **Seventy Weeks** (Daniel 9) as an incomplete prophecy. They believe that the first 69 weeks culminated in Christ's first coming, but the final week is separated by an indeterminate gap and will be fulfilled in the future during the seven-year tribulation. This period includes the rise of the Antichrist, persecution of believers, and a final battle before Christ's second coming.
- **Covenantal**: In covenant theology, the **Seventy Weeks** of Daniel are often seen as **already fulfilled**—with the 70th week pointing to Christ's ministry and His sacrificial death, not a future tribulation. The emphasis is on the **fulfilled work of Christ**, who is seen as the **completion** of God's redemptive plan. The destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. is seen as a **historical fulfillment** of Jesus' prophecies in **Matthew 24**, signaling the end of the Old Covenant and the establishment of the New Covenant in His blood. Covenant theologians often view **Revelation** as a book that was largely fulfilled in the first century (a **preterist** view), symbolizing the conflict between Christ's kingdom and the Roman Empire, rather than predicting a far-off future tribulation.

4. The Role of Israel:

- **Futurist**: Futurists maintain a **clear distinction between Israel and the Church**. They believe that God's promises to Israel, particularly those in the Old Testament, remain in force and will be fulfilled during the tribulation and millennial kingdom. The **Antichrist** is seen as making a covenant with Israel during the tribulation, which is broken halfway through, signaling his opposition to both Israel and God.
- **Covenantal**: Covenant theology teaches that **Israel's role**

as God’s chosen people has been fulfilled and **superseded by the Church**. The Church is seen as the **true Israel**, inheriting all the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament. As such, covenantal theologians do not believe in a future seven-year tribulation centered on Israel. Instead, they see God’s promises as fulfilled in Christ and extended to all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile, through the New Covenant.

5. Eschatology’s Focus:

- **Futurist**: In the futurist framework, much of biblical prophecy remains unfulfilled and is focused on future world events. This results in a **forward-looking eschatology**, with significant emphasis on the **end-times**, the **Antichrist**, and **world events** leading up to Christ’s return.
- **Covenantal**: In covenantal theology, eschatology is primarily about the **already accomplished work of Christ** and its implications for believers today. While there is still a belief in the **final return of Christ** and the **resurrection of the dead**, most of the prophetic focus is on how Christ has fulfilled the Old Testament promises and **inaugurated the kingdom of God** through His life, death, and resurrection. The covenantal perspective often emphasizes **Christ’s kingship** now and the **ongoing expansion of His kingdom** through the Church, rather than speculative future events.

Conclusion: Comparing Futurist and Covenantal Views on the Antichrist

- **Futurist theology** emphasizes a literal interpretation of unfulfilled future events, with a strong focus on a **singular Antichrist** who will arise during the

tribulation. This view often sees prophecy as a **timeline** of specific future events, centered on a **future fulfillment** of God's promises to Israel and the Church.
- **Covenantal theology**, on the other hand, views prophecy as **Christ-centered** and largely fulfilled in the past or in the person and work of Christ. The **Antichrist** is seen not as a single future individual but as a **spirit of opposition** to Christ that has manifested throughout history. This position focuses more on the **fulfillment of God's covenantal promises** in the Church and Christ's completed work, rather than on future apocalyptic scenarios.

Popularity vs. Biblical Accuracy

Many Christians who hold to a **futurist** or **dispensational** understanding of prophecy may have adopted it **by default** because it is the dominant view in evangelical circles, particularly in the West, and has been widely promoted through influential sources such as:

- **Study Bibles** (e.g., the Scofield Reference Bible),
- **Books** and **movies** (like the **Left Behind** series),
- **Preaching** and **teaching** from popular ministers who hold to dispensationalism.

However, the **popularity** of a theological viewpoint is not a **hermeneutical argument** for its correctness. It's often the case that people accept what they've been taught without critically examining other interpretations or studying the underlying theology themselves.

Lack of Awareness of Dispensationalism

Many Christians who adhere to a futurist position may not even know what **dispensationalism** is, nor are they aware of alternative views, such as **covenantalism**, **preterism**, or **historicism**. It's likely correct in assuming that a significant percentage of Christians have not studied these theological systems or evaluated the **hermeneutical basis** behind them. For many, the teaching they receive comes from their church or Christian media, and there's often little **exposure** to different perspectives unless one takes the initiative to study eschatology more deeply.

Your Personal Observations

The consideration that should not be overlooked is, many Christians are unaware of the **futurist dispensational** framework, despite holding to it in their eschatological beliefs, suggests a broader issue:

- **Lack of theological education**: Many believers may not have been taught how to interpret the Bible hermeneutically and how to weigh different theological positions critically.
- **Passive acceptance**: People often adopt what is taught to them by default, assuming it's correct simply because it's what they've always heard or because a well-known pastor or teacher advocates for it.
- **Lack of awareness of alternatives**: Many may not be aware that other eschatological views (such as **covenantalism**) exist, which are often more consistent with a **historical-grammatical** interpretation of scripture and the broader biblical narrative.

Percentage of Christians Understanding Dispensationalism

There is currently no empirical data available to provide an exact percentage of Christians who are unfamiliar with dispensationalism. However, the absence of such data doesn't suggest that a wider trend exists, as the influence of group dynamics is a factor that should not be ignored.

Dispensationalism is complex and involves a systematic approach to **dividing history** and **biblical interpretation**. Many Christians who hold futurist views likely do so without fully understanding the dispensational framework itself.

The Importance of Personal Study

It must be underscored the importance of **personal study** of the Bible and understanding the **theological frameworks** behind what we believe. Many are "fed" a particular theology without realizing that there are different interpretations that may be more **biblically sound** when applying rigorous hermeneutics. This is why it's critical for believers to study and critically evaluate:

- **The context of scripture**,
- **The historical background**,
- **The original languages**,
- **The theological frameworks** behind what they are taught.

Conclusion: Encouraging Awareness and Study

We cannot ignore the importance of reinforcing the need for **greater awareness** among Christians of the various theological positions that exist, especially regarding eschatology. If more people were aware of **covenantal theology** or other

interpretations that align with careful **biblical hermeneutics**, they might question the **futurist** position and consider other options. Encouraging **critical thinking**, **personal study**, and a deeper understanding of scripture could help believers make more informed theological decisions rather than accepting views by default due to their popularity.

Challenging leaders and teachers in the church to provide **balanced teaching** that exposes believers to multiple views is helpful when a well-rounded understanding of **biblical prophecy** is taught, rather than simply reinforcing a popular but potentially flawed interpretation.