

It Is Written

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Are You The "Anti-Christ?"

By Kyle Campbell

John is the only writer of the New Testament who uses the term "antichrist," and he uses the term just five times (1 John 2:18, twice; 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7). The Greek word from which our English word "antichrist" is translated is very simple to understand. We use the same compound word every day. We have people who are "anti-smoking," "anti-hunting," "anti-Semitic" or "anti-abortion". There really is no big mystery as to what the word means: "antichrist" is anyone who opposes Christ.

It is interesting to note that in some sense the antichrist was already present, but unfortunately John's words have been taken to suggest that an individual "Antichrist" was yet to appear. The term is commonly used today by premillennialists to refer to one individual, who is supposed to appear in the end of time. Connections between the "Antichrist" and the "Man of Sin" in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11 are often made with the visions of Daniel concerning the "king of the South" (Daniel 11:36-45) and the "beast of the sea" (Revelation 13:1-9). Premillennialists believe that Daniel foresaw a human leader, satanically energized, who would come to Jerusalem, enforce his will, exalt himself above all other people and gods, and wreck havoc and slaughter. They claim he will be so convincing as an ally and deliverer that Israel will sign a pact with him to be her protector. He will then turn against the nation and occupy the throne in the sanctuary of the rebuilt temple, which for Israel will still symbolize the presence of God, and blasphemously present himself to the world as if he were God.

There have been many who have been suggested as the "Antichrist." Chrysostom held that it was the resurrected Nero. Some Catholics held that it would be an apostate priest or even the Pope. Speculations about who the "Antichrist" is have included about every U.S. President and world leader (such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler). Some have even said that he will be a demon-possessed, super intelligent human clone!

"Antichrists" are a very real problem for us. While there may not be many professing Christians who deny that Jesus is the Christ, or that He came in the flesh, there are many who reject the authority of the apostles by rejecting the scriptures! Are you an "antichrist"? Do you actively teach or simply believe that Jesus Christ never walked the earth, but was a mythological figure? Do you actively teach or simply believe there was a man named Jesus Christ, but He did not actually rise from the dead? Do you actively speak out against or simply believe that the Christian religion is a false religion? Are you an atheist or agnostic who is indifferent and non-religious? Then you too are an "antichrist"!

The "antichrist" has no horns or red glowing eyes. Neither is the "antichrist" some demon-possessed, super intelligent human clone. Rather, the "antichrist" is that sweet elderly lady living next door who openly teaches the neighborhood kids that Jesus just was a myth. We must "continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1 John 2:24). Remember, we are living in the last hour, and Christ may come at any time and judge us for our unbelief!

Gossip: A Heart Disease

By David Hartsell

What is gossip? It is negative, unflattering words that when spread hurt the reputation of others.

Sometimes gossip is made up out of thin air. Other times the bare facts related, might be true, but many significant factors are left out, thus leaving a wrong impression. Gossip can be true but serves no good to pass it on. How does the Bible describe it? God's Word often uses words like whispers, backbiters, and evil speaking (Rom. 1:29-32; 2 Cor. 12:20 & 1 Pet. 1:1). How serious is this behavior to God? Briefly, let us look at some truths about gossip and its spiritual dangers.

Why is whispering so detrimental? What are its fruits? First, whispering can cause strong friendships to dissolve (Prov. 16:28). Imagine how this would interrupt spiritual unity and progress in the church if the conflicting friends were brethren? We must carefully measure everything we say. The consequences can be powerfully negative. Also, backbiting can feel like the "piercing of a sword" (Prov. 12:18). Has unfair, critical talk about you gotten back to you? It hurts so deeply! This is not what Jesus taught us to do. He commands us to treat others in the way we would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12). Loose speech not only damages the reputation of others, but it diminishes the usefulness of the gossiper. The only one who wins in this scenario is Satan.

Since God's Word offers such serious warnings against whispering, why do people do it? There are many reasons people participate in loose talk. Some pass on negative information either because they are unaware of the truth or unconcerned about its veracity. Paul said he was slandered when people reported he taught it was all right to do wrong as long as good was accomplished (Rom. 3:8).

That concept is not true. He did not teach it. And it, no doubt, hurt his influence with some. Envy is another reason people will gossip. Some at Corinth were jealous of Paul's authority and influence over the brethren there. Therefore, they strongly criticized his right and ability to lead God's people (2 Cor. 10:10-11). Paul warned those backbiters that he would deal with them when he came back to Corinth. Finally, some just like meddling in other people's affairs. It's exciting to them. Peter strongly cautions disciples not to be busybodies (1 Pet.4:15). He puts this sin in the same category as being a thief, and evil doer, or a murderer. God disapproves of careless speech.

How can I refrain from gossiping? The simplest answer is to love God. We show our love for Him by "keeping His commands" (1 John 5:3). When we love Him we love each other. Jesus once said, "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John13:35). That love will not just refrain from evil speech but it will uplift and encourage others (Eph. 4:29). Are we a faithful, wise Christian who can listen to sensitive things and give sound advice while keeping quiet about the whole matter? God has shown us what is good. Let's not forget it!

"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt..." (Colossians 4:6).