

Will the Antichrist Be a Muslim Cleric?

By Dr. Paul M. Elliott

From the **TeachingtheWord** Bible Knowledgebase

An Evangelical author predicts this. Does his theory stand up to Scripture?

The Islamic Antichrist?

A book titled *The Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth About the Real Nature of the Beast* (WorldNetDaily Books) predicts that the Biblical Antichrist will be a Muslim cleric named Imam al-Mahdi, the "Guided One".

The book has been hailed as "ground-breaking" and "convincing" by such noted anti-Islamic spokesmen as the late Dr. Tom White, one-time Executive Director of Voice of the Martyrs; Robert Spencer, Director of Jihadwatch; and Dr. Ergun Caner, former president of Liberty Theological Seminary at Liberty University. (Caner was ousted in 2010 for making false statements about his upbringing as a Muslim, and is now Provost and Vice President of Academics at Arlington Baptist College in Texas.)

The Islamic Antichrist book is an updated version of *Antichrist: Islam's Awaited Messiah* by the same author (Winepress Publishing, 2006). Although his picture appears on the dust jacket, the author says that he uses the pseudonym "Joel Richardson" because of fears of Muslim reprisal on himself and his family. Richardson has been featured on the talk show of Mormon Glenn Beck, and on Noah Hutchings' sensationalist *Southwest Radio Church*.

A Faulty Claim

Richardson's essential claim is that the similarities between the Biblical Antichrist and the Islamic end-times figure called Imam al-Mahdi are so "striking" that the two must be one and the same. Although al-Mahdi is not directly mentioned in the Quran, he is prophesied in

some of the *hadith*, Islamic books that are used to interpret the Quran. Both Sunni and Shiite Muslim theologians claim that at the end of the age, al-Mahdi and Jesus will rule *together* for forty years.

Richardson tells the reader that he will back his claim with the results of extensive research, but at the end of the day his assertion that Antichrist must be a Muslim religious leader is nothing but speculation. At the outset Richardson argues that *The Islamic Antichrist* is not just another fad book on eschatology, but by the end of the book he has proven that it is.

The foundational logic he uses to posit Imam al-Mahdi as the Biblical Antichrist is not much better than the kind of *illogic* that would say that since a poodle and a lion both have fur, two eyes, four legs, a head, a tail, claws, and teeth, and both are carnivorous mammals, then a poodle must be a lion.

The Book's Greatest Danger

However, the most dangerous aspect of *The Islamic Antichrist* is not its major claim, but the premise behind the claim: *You need this book to interpret Scripture for you.* You must use this book as the matrix through which you read the prophetic books of the Old and New Testaments. An understanding of Islamic eschatology is the key to understanding Biblical eschatology. The future of the Christian church and the future of Islam, says Richardson, "are divinely and directly interconnected" (page 3).

Nothing could be more un-Biblical. There is a legitimate place for books that serve as study helps in understanding Scripture and in coming to grips with Bible prophecy. But books that serve that legitimate purpose are based upon the foundational principles of grammatical-historical interpretation. The two foremost principles are that the Bible alone is the inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21), and that Scripture - not man's wisdom - interprets Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:13).

Truly helpful study books exposit Scripture on that foundation, but *The Islamic Antichrist*

does not. It overlays Scripture with an extra-Biblical matrix based on a combination of pagan eschatology and news headlines, and interprets prophecy according to that paradigm.

Perversions of Antichrist in Pagan Literature

What, then, should Christians think of this end-time figure in Islamic eschatology? Pagan literature, both ancient and modern, is filled with stories that are perversions of the Biblical accounts of the actual events of the Creation, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, and the person and work of Christ. In the same way, pagan literature also contains many stories and prophecies that are perversions of the Bible's statements concerning the Antichrist. Islam's teaching about an end-times figure called Imam al-Mahdi is in the same league with falsifications of the doctrine of Antichrist found in other non-Christian religions such as Mormonism and Theosophy, and in books and movies such as *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Omega Code*.

Christians should no sooner use *The Islamic Antichrist: The Real Nature of the Beast* to interpret Scripture than we should use Islamic or Mormon literature, or a Hollywood movie.

Don't Be Tossed Around - Grow Up

Eschatology is an area where Christians may legitimately differ, as long as we stick to the Bible, not the latest world developments, as our sole authority. To a certain extent, we look on end-times prophecy "through a glass darkly." But Peter assured Christians that in the first coming of Christ, we have the word of prophecy made more sure - substantiated, proven, and made absolutely clear - by its fulfillment (2 Peter 1:16-21).

The same will be true for the second coming of Christ and the end of the age. The true and full meaning of end-times prophecy will only become clear in its fulfillment, from the perspective of glory. But as we wait and watch, of one thing we can be absolutely sure: God always keeps His promises. Jesus is coming again to receive His own and to judge the world. Glory awaits the believer, and everlasting punishment awaits the unbeliever.

Any time a book appears with advertising hype that says, "Forget everything you thought you knew about eschatology" (or any other part of Bible doctrine), warning flags should go up in the minds of Scripture-driven Christians. But sadly, many Christians, even church leaders, latch onto the latest fad book or video. They are "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14) when it comes to Bible prophecy.

Paul told the Ephesian believers that such things are a sign of immaturity. He urged them, rather, to "grow up in all things into Him who is the Head - Christ" (4:15), not walking as the pagans walk, "in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (4:17-18).

This must be the Christian's attitude not only toward books like *The Islamic Antichrist*, but in all things.

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