

Beware of Antichrists

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[0:00] Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this Lord's day. Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of gathering without fear of danger in your house to worship you.

! I thank you, Lord, for your word that breathes life into us. We pray now that as we sit under it, that you will give us in the power of your Holy Spirit. He is to hear.

And help us, Lord, to respond in obedience and surrender to what you have to say to us today. Help us also, Lord, to respond in confidence in you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Because you are our hope and our defense. We pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We turn as we continue in our series in John's first letter to chapter 2.

This morning. 1 John chapter 2, verse 18 to 27. Again, it's on page 1211 of your pew Bible. And I encourage you to open there and follow along.

[1:10] In these passages that we have before us this morning, John wants to warn us of a powerful and potentially devastating danger to the church. The body of Christ.

He warns us against a particular type of persons. He tells us the warning signs we should be alert to. The problem to be aware of.

And he also reminds us where our defense and confidence lies in the face of this particular danger. And don't you for a second think that this is a warning for the first century church alone.

In fact, while the warning that John gives it is timely for the church in whatever age it finds itself, I can think of no other time in history than now that we desperately need to pay attention to what John has to say in these verses.

John tells us that the Antichrists have appeared. Who are these people? How do we recognize them? Look there in verse 18.

[2:23] Children, it is the last hour. And as you've heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come.

Therefore, we know that it is the last hour. Children, it is the last hour. And I think John picks up from what we looked at last week from verse 17.

He picks up right from there. In verse 17, he reminds us of the world. It is passing away. The last hour can also be interpreted as the last age.

The end times. And we often think of events in the future as the end times. When we think of the end times, we always think, Oh, end times, that's coming.

But if you read your Bible closely, you'll see that when the Bible speaks of the last age, the last hour, the end times, it speaks of us being in the end times, being in the last age.

[3:31] We are already in the end times, because the end times is the time between the Pentecost and the second coming of our Lord.

So we are in the end times. And this time, this period of time is also known as the church age. And the Bible tells us that this period is going to be marked by opposition from the world.

Intense opposition. Intense hostility. And this comes in the form of persecution. And it will come also in the form of falsehood and heresy, infiltrating the church of Jesus Christ.

So children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come.

Now this word is just a transliteration. In the Greek, it just says Antichristos. Right? It's the same word. This word Antichrist, or Antichristoi, which is the plural, can only be found here in John's letter.

[4:39] In the whole Bible, the word, the only time you will find that word is in John's letter, in 1 John and in 2 John. Nowhere else is it found in the Bible. And I think that's interesting, because the word Antichrist is familiar to us.

Right? When I say that, Antichrist, you already, you've heard that before. You have an image of what you think it is, and it means it's a familiar usage, and it's familiar, and it's really readily apparent to our imagination.

And the same is true for John's original audience. That's why he told them, as you have heard, you've heard already, that Antichrist is coming.

They also are familiar with that image. Although he's using that word for the first time, the thing that is described, the person that is described, or the people that are described, are people that are already familiar to John's hearers.

This shows that they have an awareness and an image of who the Antichrist is, or what it looks like. The Antichrist is one who will set himself up as a rival to Jesus Christ.

[5:50] who will claim to possess all the power and ability that Christ possesses. Paul talks of such a person in 2 Thessalonians, about such a figure.

He refers to this person as the man of lawlessness. Jesus himself talks about such a person, or such a time, in Matthew 24, when he spoke of false Christ and prophets who will arise.

He talks about the time of abomination. In Revelation 12, we also have pictures of such a figure. That figure is described as the beast that comes from the sea who resembles the Antichrist.

So we're familiar with that imagery and that imagination. And when we think of the Antichrist, I'm sure this is probably true of all of you, when we think of it, we think of a powerful figure.

Right? Someone with global political power and influence. That's why every president since Reagan has probably been described as the Antichrist by one person or the other.

[7:04] But note that John is not going there here in these verses. It is only here in 1 and 2 John that the name Antichrist is used. And it's interesting that John doesn't focus on a central, singular, powerful figure.

What does he focus on when he describes? He says to the church, you've heard that the Antichrist is coming. Future tense, right? It's coming. But, he says to the church, many Antichrists, plural, many Antichrists have already come, already here, past tense.

Now, the second word there, Antichrist, the way John at least uses it, it describes those who are in opposition to Jesus Christ. Those who are in opposition to the truth about him.

the Antichrists are usurpers who falsely assumes position to which they have no right or authority.

Those people who stand in opposition to the rightful owner.

Who's the rightful owner of the church? Jesus Christ. And John is saying to us, you must be able to detect them and oppose them so you don't fall victim to their false claims.

[8:26] he tells us they're already here, brothers and sisters. They're among us. That's what's also a bit scary there. It's not somebody on the outside.

He says, they are already here. We'll see what he says in verse 19. But before we get there, I want to just jump ahead to verse 22 and 23. Because he describes what they are like.

How do we know who they are, these Antichrists? He says, they are liars and they deny that Jesus is the Christ. What should we be looking for then? Their denial of who Jesus is.

That's at the root of it. It says in verse 22, who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ. This is the Antichrist. He who denies the Father and the Son.

No one who denies the Son has the Father. And whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

So there you have it. Antichrists are liars who deny that Jesus is the Christ.

[9:34] Now look at that definition given by John. It has nothing to say about political machinations. It has nothing to say about world powers or armies.

The primary thing that John wants us to see is this. that what you believe about Jesus determines whether you are an Antichrist or not.

What you believe about Jesus, who he is, the Bible's testimony about him, what you believe about that determines whether you are an Antichrist or not.

It's wonderfully simple, isn't it? But even in that simplicity it shows us that truly we are in the hour, the last hour in which the world's hostility should be expected.

And we can be surprised to see it coming from all sides because the world denies who Jesus is.

The world then is full of Antichrists.

[10:43] and they are going to rise up against the Anointed One and the Anointed Ones. We'll see that as we go along.

So, everything, John tells us, depends on what you believe about Jesus of Nazareth. Do you believe that he is the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ?

Do you believe that he is fully God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God? Do you believe that?

Do you believe that he is fully human? That for us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man.

Do you believe that which he profess every Sunday in the words of the Nicene Creed? if you don't of there are those who claim to be Christians and do not believe this fundamental truth about Jesus Christ, then, John says, they are liars.

[12:00] They are antichrists. And note here that John isn't concerned about Muslims or Jews or Hindus because they do deny that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

But that's not John's concern here. He's not concerned about those on the outside who do not share in this confession about Jesus. Although, as I said, they are antichrists themselves because they are in unbelief.

They're in opposition to Jesus Christ. But the people he wants us to be aware of and he wants us against are those who are in the church, those who are in our ranks, who claim to be in our ranks, who claim to be Christians and yet deny Jesus as the Christ, as the Christ, as he's revealed in the apostolic word.

This, John is telling us, is the Trojan horse that can infiltrate our ranks from the inside and can threaten to destroy the church of Jesus Christ. And the danger is that many will depart from the truth.

In fact, if you look at verse 19, many have departed from the truth. John says there, they went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

[13:22] But they went out that it might become plain that they all are not of us. John is not speaking of those who left us because they moved out of town and they're still in the faith and they're going to a different church.

John is not speaking of those who left to, are still Christians in another church. That's not what he's referring to here. Really, what they believe in us is those who have left the truth, who have left the apostolic message, who have denied Jesus.

That's the leaving that he has in mind here. He's not speaking of necessarily those who touch her although that's not as an unhealthy practice either, but that's really not what he has in mind here. He's primarily speaking of those who have left the truth of the gospel. So, the real issue is that these people who have left are those who have left the truth.

They've left the apostles and the message they've given to us that is centered on Jesus Christ.

They've left it for a different gospel. By the way, I want you to see that this is why doctrine is vital in the church.

[14:46] This is why we cannot dismiss doctrine as just cold facts. Because John is saying to us that these facts, these facts about who Jesus is are in fact essential to your standing before God.

It is essential because to deny Jesus or to model the truth about who he is is nothing less than denying the Father himself.

To deny Jesus is to deny God. it leaves you on the outside looking in without fellowship with the Father and the Son through the Spirit.

And Jesus himself said I am the way and the truth and the life. So no one comes to the Father except through me. So this is why the church appealed for emotional experiences.

You know in our age a lot of people they go to church for an emotional experience. for signs and wonders for loaves of bread and fishes just like the crowds that thronged after Jesus in his earthly ministry.

[16:03] But they don't have a hunger for his word of eternal life. In places and among believers where that is the desire and the hunger desire for signs and wonders for loaves of bread and fishes for emotionalism without the true hunger for the true food which is the word which is Christ himself.

When that is rife among us then that's a recipe for disaster. John is telling us that the mark of true disciples is that they will hunger for God's word of eternal life.

God's word becomes their food and sustenance. The knowledge of Jesus excites us.

Those who are true disciples and true followers. And it's unlike those whom Jesus speaks of in verse 19. They were never part of the flock of Jesus Christ.

In reality their denial of the truth about who Jesus is goes to show that they were really never part of the flock to begin with.

[17:22] That's how you know. That's how you discern the Antichrist. And it's unfortunate that not all Antichrists go out physically from among us.

Right? They will depart from the truth but they might still remain in the church. they might claim they will claim to still be Christians while denying the truth about Jesus.

Aye. That's good. She's listening. That's wonderful. So they might deny they might claim to be Christians while denying the truth about Jesus.

And that's what he wants us to be aware of. Right? They don't necessarily have to physically be aware. They will still be among us. Many this is the unfortunate reality. Many even with clergy callers in front of churches today all over the world especially in the western world claim to be Christians claim to be shepherds of souls and gospel preachers and they've denied this very foundational truth about Jesus Christ that he is fully God and fully man John is telling us they're antichrist so that's the unfortunate truth and that's why we need to be aware because many in John's days were doing the same they've departed from the truth yet they claim to have fellowship with God and have spiritual knowledge and deeper truths they have superior knowledge John calls them liars and we can stand with

John and say to deny Jesus is to deny God and to have no fellowship and no part in him and anyone who does that they are liars and enterprise but many such liars exist today many churches claim the name of Jesus and Paul apostle Paul described such people for us in 2nd Timothy chapter 3 he described them as men who will be lovers of themselves lovers of money boastful arrogant abusive disobedient to their parents ungrateful unholy unloving unforgiving slanderous without self-control brutal these are Paul's words without love of good traitorous reckless conceited lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of

[20:09] God having a form of godliness but denying its power Paul tells us turn away from such as these so how do we respond to the antichrist let's look in verse 20 to 21 John says you have been anointed by the holy one and you all have knowledge I write to you not because you do not know the truth but because you know it and because no lie is of the truth true Christians know the truth that's what John is telling us here you have been anointed here's the confidence for you brothers and sisters in Christ you have been anointed by the holy one the word translated anointing is the word charisma in Greek and the only one here is Christ himself he's the only one he's the anointed one so

John is essentially saying to the faithful you have been christened christened christened by Christos himself you have been christened by Christ the anointed one himself and what does that make you if you are truly in Christ that makes you all anointed ones the Greek word there is Christoi plural it's the term Christ you are anointed ones now before you come after me after church I'm not saying that you are Jesus there's only one Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and we have already seen that to claim to be him is to be an antichrist so that's not what I'm saying here but the wonderful irony is this as John reveals it to us those who truly believe in Jesus Christ who have been anointed with the Holy Spirit that's the anointing that John is speaking of here such people are the anointed ones they are

Christoi they are Christians that's the wonderful confidence that we have and he says he continues he says you have you all have knowledge the anointing of the Holy Spirit which is Jesus' gift to every Christian upon hearing and accepting the gospel leads us to knowledge the knowledge of him in the face of antichrist all around you in the midst of the confusion and hostility from the world Christian here here is your confidence brothers and sisters you possess the spirit of Christ you have received him at the moment you trusted in Jesus Christ for your salvation and he leads you that is the Holy Spirit leads you into truth he confirms and affirms the apostolic truth in your heart it is the spirit that is the

Holy Spirit working in you when you sit under the preaching of God's word he is at work when you open your Bible and read it he is at work in you when you participate in Bible study he is even at work when he pricks your conscience and convicts you of sin and brings you back to the feet of the cross that is the Holy Spirit anointed ones you have the anointing the Holy Spirit that's what John wants us to know you couldn't be a Christian in the first place without this anointing of the Holy Spirit because it's the Holy Spirit that revives your dead heart and brings you into a new creature so you have the Holy Spirit and you have knowledge and this is not like the knowledge that John is

speaking of it's not like that commercial you remember that commercial with this tagline I did stay at the Holiday Inn Express last night so

I can just walk into an operation room and perform surgery some people lost it's an old commercial the knowledge that John is speaking of it's not knowledge of all things it's not going to make you an Einstein all of a sudden the knowledge is specific it's the knowledge about Jesus you have the knowledge about Jesus brothers and sisters because you have the Holy Spirit so you know who Christ is you know the truth about him and now he goes on to urge us since we know the truth true Christians John tells us abide and that and you will have eternal life look there in verse 24 let what you heard from the beginning abide in you if what you heard from the beginning abides in you then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father and this is the promise that he made to us eternal life and he goes on in verse 26 I write these things to you about those who trying to deceive you but the anointing you've received that is the

[25 : 28] Holy Spirit from him abides in you and you have no need of anyone that anyone should teach you but as his anointing teaches you again what is the Holy Spirit so you might as well say as his Holy Spirit teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie just as it has taught you abide!

John is saying in these last verses brothers and sisters having told us that the Spirit abides in us to give us confidence he now tells us how we can defend ourselves against the onslaught of the Antichrist your defense John tells us your defense dear Christian is to abide!

in him you know the truth so continue in it let it take permanent address in you let it take permanent residence in your heart let it settle into your mind and heart that's what John is saying to us and how does this happen it happens through the word let the truth of the word of God which the Holy Spirit makes clear to you root you into Christ Jesus himself that's how it happens so that Christ himself becomes the soil in which you move the very hair that you breathe so Jesus Christ himself becomes your very life and this is the promise that he made to us eternal life that's how you have eternal life when through the Holy Spirit who leads you into all truth connects you to Jesus Christ who is life himself he is truth he is the way and he is the life and if you are connected with him you have eternal life so continue in that truth abide in that truth hold fast John tells us in the face of those who are trying to deceive you hold fast to the apostolic faith don't follow those who claim they have a new and deeper knowledge the knowledge of who God is is here in his word and you have the Holy Spirit that will lead you into that truth old past dear children keep yourselves from idols let us pray