

Sermon: A Lesson about AntiChrist

Text: [I John 2:18-27 ESV](#)

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Introduction: Before we begin, I want you to know that there is, and has always been, much confusion about who or even what the AntiChrist is. In the first century, the Apostle John is trying to have the Church avoid heresy and false information about “the last hour.” He also is trying to provide a prescription for the church to remain faithful.

Let’s look at our text: [I John 2:18-27 ESV](#) 18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.[a] 21 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. 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. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 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. 25 And this is the promise that he made to us[b]—eternal life. 26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

Footnotes: [a] [1 John 2:20](#) Some manuscripts you know everything

[b] [1 John 2:25](#) Some manuscripts you

Define AntiChrist: Firstly, John is the only New Testament author who uses the term “AntiChrist.” In our text today in [verse 18](#) the article (the) is not found in the original text to indicate a singular person. Even [verse 22](#) that does use the article is talking about anyone (of which there are many, John says) who would deny Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah of God). There are two other places.

The other two places that we see the term/title “AntiChrist” are [I John 4:3](#) and [II John 7](#). [I John 4:3 ESV](#) 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

[II John 7 ESV](#) 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

So the AntiChrist is anyone associated with deception and false teaching in any era. The question is debated, but is the term “antichrist” referring to a gnostic-like heresy or a singular person who holds to the idea? - a real historical person in the future or the personification of the idea?

And there is one more term found in our opening verse: **“the last hour.”** This is not sixty minutes or even a day, but the time between Jesus’ comings - His epiphany (incarnation) and His final return. One could also say we are in the “last days.” The word “last” (εσχατη) is where we get words like eschaton or eschatology which is “the study of last things,” i.e. end times. This disclosure in Scripture must carry for the Church the idea of urgency of purpose and mission.

AntiChrist is many times connected with the “man of lawlessness (*sin*, KJV)” found in **II Thessalonians 2:1-4 ESV** ¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,[a] ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness[b] is revealed, the son of destruction,[c] ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

Footnotes: [a] ² Thessalonians 2:1 Or brothers and sisters; also verses 13, 15

[b] ² Thessalonians 2:3 Some manuscripts sin

[c] ² Thessalonians 2:3 Greek the **son of perdition** (a Hebrew idiom)

Other times we hear about this same person in John’s last letter: **Revelation 13:1 ESV** ¹ And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.

We do not have time to reflect on the whole design and interpretation of the book of Revelation, but let us look at a practical definition to help us in the days ahead. It is found in our text: **I John 2:22-23 ESV** 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. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

Q. So who is AntiChrist?

A. Technically it is anyone who is “against” Christ or tries to put themselves “in place of” Christ. It has to do with false teaching. There were those within the church who were teaching Jesus did not come “in the flesh.” This term, AntiChrist, has become a favorite identification that is applied to anyone who is a perceived enemy.

Listen to this list of just a few people who have been called the “AntiChrist:” Nero Caesar, Domitian, Martin Luther, Hitler, Pope John Paul II, Billy Graham, any U.S. President including Barack Obama and Donald Trump, Henry Kissinger, and even Barney, the Dinosaur, made the list - to name a few.

I. Signs of (the) AntiChrist spirit

We see this in church communities all the time: there is pride, power with a sense of control, and a lack of submission to leadership. This is because of a lack of love in many cases. Here in John’s example these may all have been factors, but fellowship was thrown away and responsibility for oneness (unity) and witness in the community was damaged.

What was Jesus’ desire for His Body the Church? You should read all of John 17 and what is called Jesus’ High-Priestly Prayer, but here is a part of it: **John 17:20-25 ESV** ²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.

One of the first signs of a spirit of AntiChrist is:

A. Divisions that Fracture the Body of Christ

It says in our text about these defectors “they went out,” and it is implied they never were with them to start with. **I John 2:19 ESV** ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

A big reason for this division of the Body of Christ was the denial of the incarnation and Jesus’ role as Messiah. Plummer in his commentary, p. 113 says, “Those who deny the Son (and we are talking about his deity and divine nature) cancel their own right to be called ‘sons of God;’ they *ipso facto* excommunicate themselves from the great Christian family in which Christ is the Brother, and God is the Father, of all believers.”

There are groups like Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, and Unitarian Universalists among many others who call Jesus “a god,” or who see him as a creation rather than the Creator, or just a “good’ moral prophet and teacher to be admired.

Another Sign of (the) AntiChrist spirit is the:

B. Absence of the Holy Spirit in Members' Lives

There is no room for darkness and Light to coexist. Again who was it that left the Church Body? It was AntiChrist. "Membership of the Church is no guarantee that a man (person) belongs to Christ and not to antichrist." - C. H. Dodd

Again, I read: **I John 2:19 ESV** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

Those who went out were heretics of some variety (gnostics, Barclay). "The heretics went out of their own volition, but behind the secession was the divine purpose that they should be 'made manifest.' Their departing was their 'unmasking.' What is counterfeit cannot remain forever hidden (Stott)." - Rienecker, p. 788

People who love Jesus and have his Spirit do not leave His Church. They love the Church. They love the Word of God that God inspired. But when self is put first, ahead of the needs of God and others, desertion is close behind. There is no love, joy or peace in the hearts of those who divide and must be first to have *their* needs met.

False teachers are equated with AntiChrist and that spirit is in the Church Body. The Apostle Paul was aware of this potential and future danger. **Acts 20:29-30 ESV** ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

The Church was brought out of darkness into the Light. These false teachers are reversing their journey in a way, because they are returning to the darkness that they really never left.

C. Denial of Jesus and His Mission

Much of the problem in this early church was centered around the deity of Christ. When that foundational belief is lost, principles are dumped for the sake of expediency. The Church can become a social and political barometer devoid of God's Spirit who tries to convict the world of sin - at the same time God offers a way to repent and be forgiven.

What is the mission of the church? Isn't it to tell the world that God loves them and has a plan for them to not only be saved, but to tell others. Paul understood this: **II Corinthians 5:20 ESV** ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Jesus Was (Is) Messiah (v. 22a)

22a Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

What does it mean to be the Messiah? The Christ is literally “the anointed One.” And those who truly follow Jesus and have submitted to His Lordship have also been anointed.

Of what is anointing a sign? It speaks to God’s grace, favor and appointment to God’s purposes. It is a sign of the receipt of the Holy Spirit. It comes with a common assignment to that of Jesus. Jesus’ first lesson in his home town synagogue echoes the prophet Isaiah as it applies to Jesus’ mission.

Isaiah 61:1 ESV 1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor;[a] he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;[b]

Footnotes: [a] Isaiah 61:1 Or afflicted

[b] Isaiah 61:1 Or the opening [of the eyes] to those who are blind; Septuagint and recovery of sight to the blind

If we are in Christ, then we share this same Spirit and have the same heart for the lost. **Hebrews 1:9 ESV** 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

II Corinthians 1:21-22 ESV 21 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. [*down payment*]

We are family with a common purpose given to us by God through His Spirit with instructions from His Word.

Romans 8:9 ESV 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

There is no place for denying the deity of God because:

The Father and Son Are One (v. 22b-23)

22b 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. **23** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

II. Solutions against (the) AntiChrist

So as not to be on the wrong side of history and to be eternally saved in the end, you must have:

A. a specific knowledge about God and His plan for you

By specific I do not mean “secret” or a mystery that is unknowable. I mean a person needs to know how to be saved. The Apostle Peter makes this clear at the birth of the Church on Pentecost. At the conclusion to his sermon we hear: **Acts 2:36-38 ESV** ³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” ³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Church was then built, not on a one-time confession back when, but on the basis of a correct understanding of who God was, who Jesus was, and what it meant to be in a relationship with them.

Ephesians 2:19-20 ESV ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,[sojourners] but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

Anyone who says it does not matter what you believe as long as one is sincere is not in touch with reality. What you believe can produce life or death.

And doctrine is important to help build:

B. a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the Son

Listen to what Scot McKnight adds here: This lack of proper belief in Jesus is so damaging that the author declares those who left the community are outside of the faith. They do not know or follow Jesus. In **1 John**, correct Christology is not limited to theoretical ideas; belief always leads to action. Once believers understand who Jesus is and how he embodies God’s love, they must then love in the same way. If Jesus is not accepted as both fully human and fully divine, then the material world no longer holds high value. The Christians who left community no longer value the embodied community of the church. They no longer value the reality of the incarnation. They no longer value God’s love. They do not live according to love.

C. a life that abides in Jesus is eternal.

I John 2:24-27 ESV 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. 25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. 26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

Once we commit our lives to God through Jesus, we must remain faithful by abiding, remaining, and living in Him. Faithfulness is not a one-time act, but a “to-the-end” kind of relationship - no matter what. Tertullian once said: “People are not Christians unless they persevere to the end.”

Illus. If I divorce my wife at 74, and then die at 75 (none of this is in my life plan by the way), am I still in a relationship and married to my wife when I die (by her hand) at 75?

Disobedience and bad decisions carry a penalty with God, even if you are His chosen people. **Hebrews 3:12-14 ESV** 12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

“The best way to prepare for the coming of Christ is never forget the presence of Christ.”
DSB - Barclay, p.84

Conclusion: Certainly in an expansion on Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s idea of “cheap grace,” David Wells in his book: *In God in the Wasteland* (p. 30) writes, “The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is not inadequate technique, insufficient organization, or antiquated music, and those who want to squander the church’s resources bandaging these scratches will do nothing to stanch the flow of blood that is spilling from its true wounds. The fundamental problem in the evangelical world today is that God rests too inconsequentially upon the church. His truth is too distant, his grace is too ordinary, his judgment is too benign, his gospel is too easy, and his Christ is too common.”

We can do better! In all our lives, let’s cherish, guard, and share our relationship with Jesus Christ, and invite others to join us in this life-changing and urgent effort.
“To God Be the Glory; Great Things He Has Done.”