

July 23, 2017  
Sunday Evening Service  
Series: 1 John  
Community Baptist Church  
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Greer, SC 29650  
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*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from 1 John 2:18-27.

1. Explain the differences and similarities between antichrists and the Antichrist.
2. Do you know of any antichrists?
3. What is one the chief errors of antichrists?
4. Is the Pope an antichrist?
5. Why do you think you know better than people who embrace cultic teaching?
6. How do we explain the person who seems to love Christ and the Bible but then abandons the Bible and the Church?

### **ANOINTED PEOPLE CAN SPOT AN ANTICHRIST** **1 John 2:18-27**

How do I know I am a Christian? In this letter from John, the aged apostle listed various tests that indicate whether or not a person is a genuine believer in Jesus Christ. Some of those tests are trusting that Jesus is the light of truth, walking in the light, loving fellow Christians, and doing what Jesus taught. In the verses of our text, we also learn that real Christians are not fooled by antichrists.

Antichrist? Isn't he the bad guy who will come on the world scene during the seven year Tribulation? Isn't he going to be the

world ruler who will demand that everyone have his mark, the number 666, on their forehead or on their right hand? Yes, the ultimate Antichrist, the embodiment of Satan, will be the most powerful world ruler ever. He will arise during the Tribulation. He will demand that everyone in the world worship him.

But, John warns us that there have been and continue to be a lot of antichrist-kind of leaders who rise up and lead gullible people into heresy. Well, we know that. We can probably name a few. But why did John write this warning to people in the Church? Are Christians not savvy enough to identify false teachers and avoid them? Maybe not. Antichrists can be very subtle, very deceptive, and very convincing. Remember Jesus' warning: *"False christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect"* (Mark 13:22).

The local church, the various expressions of the Body of Christ, is always in danger of being infiltrated by teachers who seek to lead people away from the truth and away from Christ. Satan is the Master deceiver. His chief desire is to oppose God by robbing God of His glory. The greatest glory to our Creator comes when sinners who follow Satan are bought out of the slave market of sin to become the children of God and be conformed to the image of His dear Son. Satan hates it when sinners take on Christ's character. Therefore, he is busy creating and presenting all manner of false teaching that will divert people from embracing Christ, trusting Christ, being forgiven by Christ, and becoming like Christ.

The antichrists are abounding and busy in the world today. Our need is to identify them and avoid them. John tells us that being able to do this is a sign we are truly born again. That reality causes us to wonder: "Are all the very religious, Christian-acting people who trust, follow, and love false teachers really not Christians at all?" That is precisely what God taught us through John.

### **Lying Antichrists Are Deceiving (vv.18-19; 22-23).**

John warned his readers and us that it is the last hour (vv.18-19). One indication that it is the last hour is that there are multiple antichrists. To his dearly beloved children, like us, John the pastor wrote: *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 (v.18).*

Let's just admit that the term *last hour* seems like a confusing term. If it was the last hour in John's day, how can it still be the last hour? The term speaks of an epoch of time, not duration of time, measured in minutes, hours, days, months, years, and such. Therefore, the world has been in the "last hour" ever since Jesus ascended to heaven with the promise that He will return (John 14:3).

During this era, this epoch between Christ's ascension and His return, many antichrists appear and are active. God promised a significant antichrist kind of leader all the way back in Daniel's day (Daniel 11:36-37). Jesus warned that a sign of the "last hour" before He comes again will be that "*many false prophets will arise and lead many astray*" (Matthew 24:11). During these days, teachers will rise up who claim to be the Christ or like Christ, but who of necessity must be antichrist. Jesus warned, "*Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect*" (Matthew 24:23-24).

But in the last days just before Christ's return, the chief Antichrist will come on the world scene. Speaking specifically of the Antichrist, the same one Daniel promised, Jesus warned, "*So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)*" (Matthew 24:15). Paul called this person the "man of sin." *Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 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. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? (2 Thessalonians 2:3-5).*

He will be the embodiment of Satan who seeks to replace Christ. *And all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain (Revelation 13:8).* The title "Antichrist" will fit him well.

But, returning to the idea John taught, that there will be many antichrists, we learn that antichrists don't agree with us. John said, *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 (v.19).* There were antichrists, false teachers in the church at Ephesus. They separated from the true believers. It was necessary for them to leave because they were not on the same page regarding truth.

This same principle has been active throughout Church history and continues to be active. Some cults are blatantly unbiblical, have no association with Bible whatsoever, and flow from pagan, manmade religions of the past. Many cults were formed by people who left the church. Mormonism, for example, was begun by Joseph Smith who became disgruntled with all churches and claimed God called him to start his own. Jehovah's Witnesses was begun by Charles Russell who could not accept the teaching of the church concerning the deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Unitarianism Universalism formed in 1961 with the merger of two supposedly Protestant Christian denominations. Such cults are definitely "not of us" and that is why they "went out from us."

Putting it quite bluntly, John pointed out that these people are liars (vv.22-23). Maybe you would say of them, "Liar, liar pants on fire, nose as long as a telephone wire." It's a phrase we kids used to yell at each other when we suspected the other kid was lying. I like what the Urban Dictionary says about this phrase. "They also like to scream it at adults who tell them stories about fairies. It is an overall stupid thing to say, since if your pants actually caught on fire when you lied, more politicians would be dead."

Well, antichrists are liars. They lie about the fact that Jesus is the Christ. *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 (v.22).* The most obvious error that John addresses in this letter is that the antichrists deny that Jesus is the Christ? We hold fast to the teaching that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, whose sacrifice alone atones for sin; that Christ is the head of the Church which He has purchased with His own blood; and that Christ alone is worthy of honor, praise, and worship.

Is that not what all Protestant Christian churches believe? No, the evidence would indicate that the exaltation of Christ is not their focus. The activity of our ministry will reveal what we think of Christ. We might begin the test by asking what is attractive about our church. Do we exalt Christ and make Him the center of our ministry?

Many years ago, an older pastor gave me some very sound advice. He told me to always remember that what I win people with is what I win them to. I have never forgotten that principle which has served me well when I have briefly contemplated creating an exciting, must-be-a-part-of program that will certainly attract people. The principle has kept me from attempting to create a music program that is very entertaining. The principle has served to guard me against winning people to myself with my irresistible, magnetic personality. My only desire these many years of ministry has been to win people to Jesus Christ by exposing Him, revealing Him, exalting Him through the preaching of His Word. In my mind, not to do that would be to attempt to replace Jesus with someone or something far inferior.

This is not a simple problem of some churches or people focusing on Christ while others prefer a different focus. The problem is that Christ-deniers are not Christians. That is an eternal problem. John warned, *No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also (v.23)*. In other words, it is impossible to be born again and not be fully convinced that Jesus of Nazareth is equal with God. To confess that the Son is co-equal with the Father is to live it out. Most cults depart from the truth at this point.

Even churches that are not considered cults strain this point. Is another man equal with Christ, the representative of Christ, and, therefore, also equal with God? Is another person, even Mary, equal with Christ? Is an organization able to do the work of Christ? Many antichrists have gone out into the world. They went out from us because they were not like us.

### **We Who Have Been Anointed Know Better (vv.20-21; 24-27).**

John assures us that we know the truth (vv.20-21). People who have the Holy Spirit have knowledge. *But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge (v.20)*. Unlike the false

teachers (the antichrists), we know. That is a key word. Knowledge was the important issue for the Gnostics (a likely target of John's accusation of antichrist). They contended that only the privileged were initiated into the special knowledge of God. Only those who had that special knowledge were saved. But as we have seen, their special knowledge of God was untruth, error that denied the deity of Christ.

In contrast to them, we all have knowledge. We have come to know the truth and it has continuing effects in our lives. We know the one true God the creator of all, the eternal judge of all. We know that He is three persons in one eternal being. We know that He sent Christ the eternal Son to pay the penalty for sin. We know that God the Son (Christ) and God the Father have sent God the Holy Spirit to abide with the saints. We know the truth about everything the antichrists twist and pervert in their claim of having knowledge.

How do we know this stuff? We know because we have been anointed. The antichrists claimed to have some kind of nebulous, unexplainable initiation into the truth. We who trust Christ have truly been anointed. This is a picture of the special occasion in the Old Testament when a prophet anointed a person with oil to signify God's choice and use of that servant. Like Samuel anointing Saul to be king which marked him off as God's chosen servant (1 Samuel 15:1). And Samuel anointing David as the choice of God's own heart, His clearly revealed will (1 Samuel 16:1-12).

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to minister to His followers. His ministry is to teach and call truth to our minds. Jesus promised, *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26)*. At the moment of salvation, the believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This is the anointing, and it has continuing effects in our lives. From that moment we understand the truth of the Bible. From that moment we understand our relationship with the Triune God.

A few years ago I gave my book titled "True Worship" to a person as a gift. Some months later this person confessed that she had tried and tried to read the book, but that she had no earthly idea what I was trying to convey. That is not because I am a scholar who writes deep things hard to understand. The problem was that this person is

not born again, does not have the indwelling Holy Spirit, and therefore cannot grasp spiritual truth.

No, the unredeemed person will not be able to understand what we know because we know through the Holy Spirit's teaching. This letter is for born again people. *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 (v.21)*. No lie is of the truth. That seems like a self-evident statement. But when a lie is popular, it brings much pressure to the Christian to believe it. When the important people, the popular people, the scholarly people all agree about a lie, who are we to try to refute them?

But because we are born again, we know the truth. We are able to open the Bible and read the truth that God has established for eternity. We are able to understand the Bible. Therefore, we know certain truths that are foundational, truths that seem simple to us, but totally escape the learned and politically correct people.

Sometimes we need to be encouraged with the simple truths of the Bible. For example, it is not difficult to understand that God the Creator has the authority to make the rules. It is not difficult to understand that everyone has sinned by breaking God's law. It is not difficult to understand that Jesus shed His blood on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. It is not difficult to understand that if we confess our offenses against God and fully trust the finished work of Christ, He will forgive our sins.

These things are not difficult to believe and understand **unless** we believe a lie that is not the truth. If we believe that God is not the creator, all those simple truths fall apart. We conclude that there is no sin and no need to repent and no need to trust Christ if we don't believe the simple truth. Is it true that God is the Creator, and is it a lie that all things simply evolved? Our conclusion on that matter will determine what we believe and how we live.

To those who have received the Holy Spirit who teaches us the truth of the Bible, John wrote, let the truth abide. If the truth abides in you, you have eternal life. Notice that in this wonderful statement there is a command. *Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you (v.24a)*. What sinners heard from the beginning is the gospel. The "gospel" is more than that message that we are sinners who need a Savior. It is the whole story from God's first creative act to

culmination of His plan in eternal life. It is the Bible message. We come to the knowledge of this truth by God's grace. But then we are responsible to yield to God's grace throughout life. This is how we let the truth keep on remaining in us.

There is also a great promise in this statement. *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 (vv.24b-25)*. If we actively let the truth keep on remaining in us, we will keep abiding in our relationship with God the Father and God the Son. If we actively remain in our relationship with God, we will receive the promise of eternal life.

But what if someone only holds to the truth of the Bible for a period of time? What if someone abandons the truth? That person will not receive eternal life because they never were saved, regardless of how dedicated to the Bible they seemed to have been. This is the truth Jesus revealed in the story about the Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23). Some truth falls on stony and weedy ground. That ground appears to be productive for a time. But circumstances of life kill the apparent production. Soil that God has tilled up through conviction of the Holy Spirit receives the truth and continues to actively produce. Truly born again people actively abide in their relationship with God and definitely receive eternal life.

This statement contains a command, a promise, and now we also see a warning. *I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you (v.26)*. Antichrists try to deceive real Christians. They teach things similar to the Bible. In fact, they quote the Bible. But at some point their doctrine swerves off the path of truth.

For example, there are and have been thousands of preachers and professing Christians throughout the centuries, and still, who teach that a person comes to the knowledge of salvation through their human wisdom and by their own strength. Then the "saved" person maintains salvation through their own strength and wisdom. Sometimes they fail and lose their salvation. But that is okay as long as they believe again and get their salvation back. That false teaching exalts human wisdom and minimizes the work of Christ. It is error that deceives.

We who have the anointing do not fall for those false teachings because the truth abides in us. *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 (v.27).*

The fact is, the Holy Spirit continues to abide with real Christians. Because the Holy Spirit continues to abide in us, so does the truth of the Bible. The person who has the abiding Holy Spirit understands the Bible and Bible teaching resonates with him or her. The person who abandons Bible teaching and the church never was born again.

Again John teaches in this passage that real Christians need to be active living out what we really are. Many antichrists will teach religious ideas that minimize Christ and His work. Many antichrists will abandon the true fellowship of believers and promote human-centered error. Real Christians reject the antichrists' teaching and the antichrists themselves to live in fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At times that lifestyle appears to be unpopular or even unkind, but it is the life of one dedicated to God and His Word.