

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time*

Christians and Antichrists, Part 2

Scripture: 1 John 2:19-26

Code: 62-19

For those of you who are visiting with us, what we do around here when we gather together is what you've already experienced, in addition to that we turn to the Bible. This incredibly enriched book written by God using certain human authors who wrote down what God wanted them to write, we go into the Bible to understand it. It is God's revelation, it is God's message to us. It is the only book that God ever wrote. Everything He wanted us to know is contained within the 66 books of the Bible. Every Word of God is pure. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. All of it is profitable for our instruction and our training. All of it works together to produce in us an understanding of divine truth, an understanding that changes our lives for time and eternity.

So we have determined that if this is fact is the Word of God, if every word comes from Him, every line, every verse, every paragraph, every chapter, every book, then we must go to each of these portions and we must understand what it is that He has said. So month after month and year after year and decade after decade we work our way through the text of Scripture. And we are transformed in the process, as you well know.

We find ourselves in a book in the New Testament called 1 John. John wrote three letters, the Apostle John, three letters. The first one is the longest and then there are two very brief letters which are identified as Second John and Third John. Of course, we also know that John wrote a gospel which is the record of the Lord Jesus Christ. And also, John was used by God to write down the book of the Revelation, the apocalypse which describes the end of the world and the eternal state.

But we're looking at one of his three letters. This first one, just five chapters, a book that many consider to be basic to an understanding of the Christian faith. And it is and yet though it is basic, the longer you study it the more you dig into it the deeper and richer you find that it is. You might assume that a book that is very basic wouldn't have much appeal to someone who was very mature and very knowledgeable in the Bible and theology. Quite the contrary is true. The mysteries of this marvelous letter are inexhaustible, as we're finding out.

Now we find ourselves in the second chapter working our way through in a section that really takes up the latter part of the second chapter from verse 18 down to verse 27. And we've titled this discussion, "Christians and Antichrists." And the reason for that is because of verse 18, "Children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen from this we know that it is the last hour."

Almost everybody in the western world can demonstrate some familiarity with the word Antichrist. It's a somewhat ominous word, it's a word that carries with it certain apocalyptic visions. It has sort of connected with it a certain darkness, a certain bleakness, a certain fierceness, it's a word that sort of belongs with evil and demons and destruction and death. It's a foreboding word, this word antichrist and rightly it should be because the antichrist is indeed a foreboding individual, the Bible says, will come at the end of the age.

The word antichrist is a word that evokes then a sort of singular response from everybody who is familiar with it. If you know anything about the Bible, when the word antichrist comes up, you think immediately about a vicious beast who arises at the end of human history and is empowered by Satan and dominates the world and forces everybody to worship him and massacres people all over the globe, particularly Jewish people and people who confess Jesus Christ. A horribly powerful sovereign, almost omniscient person who knows everything about everybody because everybody is sort of in the system, marked in some way as to be identified by him and his forces. A horrible creature, a powerful, threatening creature that finally comes to his end, the Bible says, under the destruction of Jesus Christ who returns, engages in a very brief battle with Antichrist, and all of his forces because Antichrist is a human being, albeit energized by Satan and demons, still a human being he is defeated along with his forces by Jesus Christ at the end of human history. And Christ then sets up His own Kingdom on the earth and rules in that Kingdom for a thousand years, at which time the universe as we know it is dissolved and in its place a new heaven and a new earth is created where we who know Christ will live with Him forever and ever in perfection, righteousness, joy and peace.

But just the word antichrist, and we think of this solitary monster, this massively powerful anti-God, indeed anti-Christ individual who is the last and greatest enemy that the gospel will ever know. But you've got to extend your thinking beyond that because in verse 18 it says it is true, you have heard it right that Antichrist is coming, that final one, even now, however, many antichrists have arisen, says John. You don't have to wait to run into antichrist, the only antichrist is not the one that's coming at the end of human history. In fact, there are many antichrists right now. They are, in fact, everywhere. Some of them are here tonight in this place. They're in your homes, in some cases, in your schools, they're at your work place. They ride with you on the airplane. They ride with you on the bus. They talk to you in the neighborhood. They're involved in every aspect of human life, education, government, medicine, entertainment, religion. They're everywhere, these antichrists.

How are we to identify them? Go down to verse 22. How do we know when we've run into an antichrist? Verse 22, "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, this is the antichrist." Anybody is antichrist who denies that Jesus is the Messiah. Bound up in that word Christ, of course, the Hebrew equivalent, Messiah, is that He is the anointed of God, the anointed prophet,

the anointed priest who intercedes for men before God, the anointed King, the sovereign Lord. Any denial of Jesus as Lord and Redeemer, Lord and Savior constitutes an antichrist attitude. You cannot come to Jesus with patronizing sort of diminished compliments. You cannot speak of Jesus as a good man, a noble man, a religious man, a wonderful healer, a man who had God in his heart, as one writer called him, you cannot with all of the best that you can think of to describe Him, describe Him as man without taking your place among the antichrists. He is not just a man, even a good man, even the best of men. He is not just a religious man, even the best of religious men. He is in fact the Messiah, the Christ of God. And if you deny that, the rest of the verse says you are denying the Father and the Son. You have just denied God and His Son because Jesus the Messiah is the Son of God, that is to say possesses the same nature of God, He is to God as you are to your father. You bear the same essence. You are the son of your father. You're genetically put together from your father. You bear the same essential life essence, you are human because he is human. And Jesus is the Son of God, since God is God, Jesus then is God as well. Since God is deity, divine, so is Jesus. You say anything less than that Jesus is Messiah, Savior, promised, anointed, prophet, priest and King, Redeemer, if you say anything less than that, you've denied the Son and you have therefore denied the Father. The Son and the Father are one.

"Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." If you do not confess Jesus with your mouth as Lord, Romans 10 as we heard earlier tonight, Romans 10:9, if you do not confess...what is confess? *Homologeō*, to say the same thing, if you do not agree with Jesus concerning who He is as has been revealed by Him and in Scripture, if you do not make the right assessment of Jesus, you are not from God and this is literally it says, this is antichrist, the antichrist attitude. "You have heard that it is coming, but it now is already in the world."

And one other verse in 2 John verse 7, "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." If you deny that He is Messiah, that's an antichrist spirit. If you deny that He is the Son of the Father God, therefore bearing the essence of deity, that constitutes an antichrist attitude. If you deny that he is God in human flesh, that is antichrist attitude.

Summing it up, to say anything less about Jesus than what is true, to deny anything about Him that is revealed concerning Him in Scripture is to take your place among the antichrists. Any misrepresentation of Christ constitutes an antichrist attitude. Anybody who rejects Jesus Christ as Messiah, Lord and Savior, anybody who rejects Jesus Christ as God, anyone who rejects Jesus Christ as man cause He was fully the God/Man is antichrist. You cannot reinvent Jesus. You cannot patronize Him with some definition that you think is perhaps good enough, if you say less than what God has said about Him, you are guilty of being antichrist.

To make it very simple, Jesus said this in Matthew 12:30, "He who is not with Me, is against Me." And there isn't any middle ground. You're either with Him, or you're against Him, that's it. You're

either a Christian, or an antichrist. Kind of hard to think about the fact that antichrist wait on you in the restaurant, check you out of the market, but they do. Anybody who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, who does not embrace Him as Messiah, King, as God, as Man is guilty of the spirit of antichrist. You are either for Him, or you're anti-Christ.

And so the emphasis on Christians and antichrists in this section is central to John's purpose. Go back to chapter 2 where our text is for a minute. John is trying to clarify who the true Christians are. And he's trying to finger the phonies. He's trying to put his finger on the deceivers, especially those deceivers who infiltrate the church and try to replace the truth of God with lies. Do I have to go back over this again? Maybe just very briefly.

There is in the universe a great conflict between the truth and lies. God is true. God cannot lie, the Bible says. God speaks only what is true. That's because God is absolutely perfect. God always tells the truth, always speaks the truth, He is the truth. That's why Jesus could say, "As God incarnate I am the way, the truth and the life." And so what Satan wants to do is sow a lie everywhere he can in the world so that people don't believe God. Satan does not want people worshiping God. Satan hates God who judged him and sentenced him to a Lake of Fire and even created a Lake of Fire for Satan and all the demons and as well all the antichrists, human beings, who reject Him. But Satan does everything he can to sow lies in the minds of men and women, that's what happened back in Genesis chapter 3, as we've noted for you, comes to Eve in the garden and he says did God really say....making her question God. Then he goes even beyond that and said God told you a lie, God said you would die when you ate of that fruit, I'm telling you you won't, God is a liar, I'm telling you the truth, so this is the conflict. God speaks the truth in His Word, and Satan comes in to sow lies. And so what Satan wants to do is to sow those lies among the people who believe the truth. He wants, as it were, rip out of the hands of God all the potential prospects. He wants to tear out of God's possession all those who are drawing near to Him through hearing the truth. And so he works very hard to sow lies in the church.

We see that all the way through the New Testament. No sooner is the church planted, founded, launched in the second chapter of Acts, then heresy just hammers the church. And all the writers of the New Testament epistles that are working with the church and writing to the church deal with the heresies that are assaulting the church cause this is the great satanic strategy. Not all antichrists infiltrate the church. Anybody who rejects Christ is antichrist. Not all antichrists infiltrate the church, but many do. And John wants his readers, including us, to be able to distinguish between the true Christians and the antichrists who infiltrate the church to replace the truth of God with satanic lies. John dealt with this, as you know, and Peter dealt with this and James dealt with this. Jude dealt with this and Paul dealt with it all the time. The lies sown among the believers, among those who were committed to the truth, to lead them astray and to capture those who were just coming to understand the truth.

So John knows that in this congregation there are Christians and antichrists. There are true believers and there are the deceivers, the liars, the antichrists who have come in to infiltrate. He wants the readers to understand the difference...the difference. As you know, going through this book there are basically two categories of tests that he offers. He offers doctrinal tests to determine whether someone is a true Christian. Doctrinal tests are twofold, the first is their view of man that man is a sinner. Secondly, their view of Christ. Someone who is a true Christian has a right view of himself, that is a right view of his depravity and his sinfulness, and a right view of Jesus Christ as Messiah, as God and as Man.

And then there are also moral tests that John gives by which you can determine a Christian. Not only by what they believe, but by how they live. And the two moral categories have to do with obedience and love. True believers who have been transformed obey God, they obey the Word of God gladly, eagerly. Also, they love God, they love others and they do not love the world. So true Christians, John is pointing out all through this epistle, are known by their doctrine, they have the right view of sin and the right view of Christ, they're known by their behavior, they are obedient to the Word of God, and they demonstrate spiritual love and they don't love the world.

But here in verse 18 is a very severe contrast. You could look at a church and say, "Well, there are the people in the church who believe the truth, and there are those who don't. There are the people in the church who obey and love and the people who don't obey and don't love. And you would understand what we're talking about, what John is writing about, but how much more stark is it to say there are in the church Christians and antichrists? Those are such polar opposites." And for John in this text the issue is their view of Christ...their view of Christ. If you have the right view of Christ that leads you to salvation, if you have the wrong view of Christ, you are an antichrist. Now if you're in the church and these people appear, these who are against Christ who assault the character of Christ as God and Man and who assault the role of Christ as the anointed Messiah, prophet, peace and King. If you were in a church and you see people doing that, could shake your confidence...could shake your faith, could make you wonder whether you're safe, whether you're okay, whether you might defect, whether you really have the truth or not. And so John says the very fact, in verse 18, just still reviewing, the very fact that there are these antichrists that infiltrate the church and so lies is proof that it is the last hour. He starts verse 18, "It is the last hour," he ends verse 18, "It is the last hour." Only again he says, "We know that it is the last hour because of the many antichrists that have arisen. It is the very attack on the truth that proves Christ to be true.

Why would Satan be making such concerted effort against the deity of Christ? Why is it that worldwide, incessantly, relentlessly every cult, every heresy always assaults the nature of Christ? Liberal theology assaults the nature of Christ. Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, you name it, they go after the person of Christ. This is typical of the satanic assault and it is evidence plenty that Christ

is the true Christ to have stirred up this much animosity.

What does it mean it is the last hour? Well I told you last time, the last hour means the messianic age, the age inaugurated when Messiah came, the last hour of man's day. We know it's the last hour the time of Messiah because the Messiah must have come or else why would all the forces of antichrist be so relentless and adamant in attacking Him? And so we have the distinction then in verse 18 between antichrist and Christians.

Now what I want to do in the verses that flow down here, and John...the way John writes is not always linear and sequential, he kind of circles around things. So we'll take this in two sections and jump around a little bit. First of all, let's look at the characteristics of the antichrists, and then we'll look at the characteristics of the Christians.

The characteristics of the antichrists, three characteristics that identify them. These antichrists are false Christians, as I said, not all antichrists come into the church, infiltrate and try to sow lies and deceptions, attacking the nature of Christ, and the work of Christ. But the ones that do are manifest, they are manifest. And in this case the first thing that John says about them is, the first characteristic, they depart from the fellowship...they depart from the fellowship. Wherever there is a true church and a pure church, a true fellowship, wherever there are those who genuinely know Christ, these liars and deceivers and antichrists don't survive. They come into the church, they endeavor to destroy the church by sowing the discord of lies and deception. But eventually they leave. Verse 19, "They went out from us," they-going back to these antichrists, they went out from us.

Now let me stop there for just a minute. The people in the church were maybe wondering why these people had come, why they had proclaimed that they were true teachers, they knew the truth, that the true believers in the church were under some illusions that Jesus wasn't who they believed He was. That the theology that they had been taught was not accurate, that it wasn't a representation of the truth of God. They were saying all of this, they were a part of the church. Then all of a sudden they left. Some of the believers might be saying, "Were they really telling us the truth? Are we wrong? And they left and we've lost our opportunity and now we're sort of caught in this deception?" There were those kinds of questions apparently swirling around. They went out from us, did they take the real truth with them? Well maybe there were some in the church that were influenced by these false teachers that had at least superficially, like we heard tonight again in the times of baptism, superficially they possessed Christ, they said they believed, they went through the motions outwardly. The false teachers came in, they followed along the false teachers, they bought into their lies and when the false teachers moved on, these people left the church. How are we to understand that? Did they follow the truth? Did those guys have the truth? What were those people? And if they were really real, why did they leave? Why did they follow the false teachers if they were really a part of us, if we really had the truth?

And in verse 19 John answers all of those kinds of queries by saying, "They went out from us but they were not really of us. For if they had been of us, they would have remained with us. But they went out in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us."

Amazing thing, God actually allowed false teachers still to come into a church, to pull out the people who aren't genuine. Did you get that? God uses liars and deceivers and false prophets to purge the church. There were some people who left the church to which John is writing. Could be any other church situation at that time or since, but initially these were people who left the church. They abandoned it. They went out from us...these antichrists left us Christians. Why? And they, no doubt, took some people with them. Why? Well they never really were of us, they're not real Christians, if they had been of us they would have remained with us, they went out in order that it might be shown that they all were not of us. Their defection gives clear evidence of their character.

There was an actual purpose in their departure, at the end of the verse. I mentioned it. See that "in order that," that's a purpose clause. They went out, they left...obviously the Spirit of God was at work in their leaving, "in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us." So God allows false teachers to come in the church, influence certain people in the church, drag them out of the church and the church says...what happened? What happened? Did they...are we missing something? Are we wrong? Are we not? How could this happen? These people were here, they seemed to be professing the truth, and they left.

And the response of the writer John is, "This is one way in which God makes it clear who is real...who's real. Their departure was their unmasking. And it was good that the false teachers came...listen...and that the false teachers led astray those who never really were of us, so that they wouldn't remain like leaven, like a rotten apple in a barrel to influence the rest of us."

Doesn't God work in amazing ways? You might say to yourself, you actually believe that God would allow antichrists to infiltrate the church? Yes, just like He allowed a messenger of Satan to tear up the Corinthian church to accomplish the humility of the Apostle Paul, as 2 Corinthians 12 says, God would allow error to come into a church to be sown among believing people. Today it happens all the time through books that are written, through magazine articles, through internet sites, through television, through radio in order that like magnets the antichrists might attract to themselves the people who aren't real believers and purge the church. Amazing. We have that going on here. I'm amazed. I hear about people who have decided to follow some false teacher or some false teaching, leave the church, abandon a true and biblical view of Christ, the doctrine of salvation.

I'll give you an illustration. A lady in our church when we were over in the chapel, actually the Family Center, came to me after the service and said that she wanted to come to the knowledge of Christ.

And I went off in the little side room and spent an hour with her and talked to her about Christ. And she professed to believe and embraced Jesus Christ. She stayed in our church for many, many, many, many years. She taught in our church. She served in our church. She became something of a personal missionary, endeavoring to reach out to people. She was in our church until she began to be drawn by false teachers, probably two decades in our church. Her influence was growing. It was growing not only in our church but in other churches as she was communicating her faith in Christ to women's groups here and there. And false teachers came, got a hold of her, and she left, totally denied everything she said she had believed. And people have said to me, concerning this woman, "How could she do this?" And the answer is here. God protected not only us, but God protected His church in other places by sending along a strong enough magnet of false teaching to unmask her, lest she be responsible for leading others astray. I've communicated that to her on a number of occasions.

She went out from us because she wasn't of us. If she had been of us, she would have continued or remained with us. That's what it says. But she went out so that it could be known that she was not of us. There are going to be plenty of false teachers out there and they're going to attract the false believers. Now she is an apologist for a false religious system. Everywhere she can go, she makes a defense for that false system against the truth.

There's no question in my mind whether or not she's a Christian, she's not. She went out from us because she was not of us. And I'll give you a little hint of what's to come. True Christians don't do that. True Christians don't do that. The end of verse 27, he says, "His anointing teaches you, you true Christians, about all things is true and is not a lie and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." You know what "abide in Him" means? You will remain. You can send a dozen false teachers into this church, you can put them on the television, the radio, the internet, whatever other means to communicate, they will not...they will not draw true believers away because true believers remain, they abide, they stay. And that's why in verse 19 he says, "If they had been of us, they would have remained with us."

You're not going to abandon the truth for a lie if you're a true believer because the faith to believe the truth that God has granted to you is permanent. So their departure was their unmasking. Luke 12:2 says, "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known." And part of God's work in His church is the work of uncovering. It's really interesting to watch this happen, to watch the people who profess to be Christians follow the deceivers and the liars and the religious phonies, and charlatans. If they had been of us, they would have remained with us. That is the principle.

Now what that's saying is that salvation is proven by perseverance. Have you heard that word? You remember one of the great tenets of Reformed Theology is the perseverance of the saints. True

Christians stay true to the faith. Colossians 1:21, "You were formerly alienated, hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He's not reconciled you in His fleshly body through death," you've been reconciled to God. "You have been presented before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach." Isn't that amazing? You've literally been given to God, holy and above reproach because you've been covered with the righteousness of Christ. Verse 23, adds this caveat, "If indeed you continue in the faith and are not moved away." If you are moved away, then you were never blameless and holy before God, you were never justified. You were never reconciled. You were reconciled if you continue in the faith, it is an element of redemption that perseveres. It is a part of God's saving gift. There are no defectors among the ranks of the transformed.

In Hebrews 3:6 it says, "Christ is faithful as a Son over His house, whose house we are if we hold fast our confidence." How do you tell when somebody really belongs to God? How do you tell when somebody really belongs to Christ? If they continue. "If you continue in My Word you're My real disciple." Again Hebrews 3:14, "We have become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning to the end." If there's perseverance.

So the first thing you can note about antichrists in the congregation is they depart from the fellowship. They don't survive the truth. They come in, they do their work, they like magnets pull those who are not real, if they can, out of the church and their evil treacherous work actually is overturned by God for the purifying of the church. And that's been going on for a long time in Christianity. It's been going on certainly in my lifetime, it's going on all the time. There are false teachers all over the place in Christianity, all over everywhere, pulling false believers away from the true church. So in a sense they meant it for evil, God meant it for...what?...for good. By their defection they give evidence that they never were really of us.

So John is saying...let's go back to 1 John, John is saying, "Look, don't be shaken, don't be rattled by this defection, don't be wondering...oh, oh, oh, what happened, did these people lose their salvation? Are they going after something that we should be listening to?" Don't question what you know, don't doubt your...don't doubt the truth of Scripture. All you saw there happening when those people left was the unmasking of hypocrites. You saw people who never did believe truly apostatize which means fall away before they ever came to full faith. John is saying, "You Christians, don't be shaken by that. Don't be shaken by the fact that that happened. Don't expect that that's never going to happen. Don't think that that can only happen when Antichrist comes. When Antichrist comes they knew that Antichrist would be a deceiver, right? They knew that. They knew that Antichrist would be a deceiver from Daniel, that he would make a pact with Israel and deceive them and break the pact in an abomination of desolations, they knew that, Jesus repeated that in His Olivet Discourse, His sermon on the His Second Coming. I told you they knew the Thessalonian epistles it talked about the men of sin who would come and who literally deceived the world, they knew the coming antichrist would be a deceiver and John is simply saying to them, there are antichrists all over the planet now,

some are going to infiltrate the church, they're going to deceive people and lead them out. But when they go out, know this, they never were really of us. And the fact that this is going on should prove to you that it is the last hour, it is the messianic time, and Jesus indeed is the Messiah, or there wouldn't be such an assault on Him. So instead of making them question their faith, it should have strengthened their faith. It should be the very opposite of producing doubt, it should produce confidence.

They were phony from the start. It just took this to unmask them. Let them go. Let them go. Because they are...they're a negative influence in the church, they're infection in the church. See, that's one of the reasons why church discipline is such an important thing. You remember that in Matthew 18 Jesus says, "Somebody sins, go to them, if they repent you've gained your brother. If they don't take two or three, if they don't repent, tell the church." As you know, tell the church, the whole church goes after them. If they still don't repent, what do you do with a sinning person in the church who won't repent? What does it say? What's the next step? "Put them out, treat them like a tax collector, and an outcast, put them out." And when you put them out, you treat them as if they're unbelievers, because you don't have any evidence that they are. You have to wait and see what unfolds, whether or not there will be repentance and the evidence of true repentance in their life which would indicate that perhaps they were true believers. Or became true believers under the influence of the Spirit of God in the time of discipline. But better for the church that they be out than that they be in, infecting the church with their sin. The same is true of anybody who denies Christ. The same is true with anybody who denies the gospel. The same is true of anybody who is a liar and a deceiver. They come in the church, God allows them in the church, so that they can draw to themselves the false believers, so that they can leave the church for the church's own benefit.

And we should know that in this time, this time since Messiah first arrived, this last time when the Messiah has announced Himself, when Jesus Christ is the Messiah in this last hour that the attack on Him that's gone on since He first arrived and will go until He comes back is evidence that it is indeed the last hour. Turn to 1 Timothy chapter 4, boy, our time is going quickly tonight, 1 Timothy chapter 4, the Spirit explicitly says that in later times, in these last times, some will fall away from the faith. They're not true Christians. We just learned that in 1 John 2:19. They'll fall away from the faith. How will they fall away from the faith? They'll pay attention to deceitful spirits, doctrines concocted by demons. They'll believe hellish lies.

How they going to hear them? By means of the hypocrisy of liars, seared in their own conscience. Seared means scarred, that is to say it's senseless tissue. When you scar a portion of your body, you destroy the nerves and so it doesn't have any feeling or any sense. Well their conscience is scarred. They're unconscionable, they don't feel any pain about the fact that they're hypocritical, that they're leading people astray. It's a painless experience to them. They've literally hardened their conscience so long that it's got nothing but scar tissue over it. So here come these hypocritical false teachers,

lying, unconscionable liars, but it's as if they've been branded with an iron, they're beyond feeling, cauterized consciences feeling nothing. And they're the ones that spread the lies.

And as a result, "Some will fall away from the faith." They get to the church, they're starting to understand, they're interested to some degree, they get close, like in Hebrews chapter 6, they get all the way up the edge and then they fall away. That's apostatizing. It happens under the influence of false teachers.

Now you want to do everything you can to protect the church. This doesn't mean, "Okay, let's invite all the false teachers in." We want to guard the truth, but we know they're going to come because this is the satanic strategy. We want to keep it at a minimum if we can but we know they're going to come. Oh they may not join this church, but they'll try to influence this congregation. And as I said, they can do it through books and tapes and they can do it through the internet, they can do it every way that media conveys information. Cause that's the strategy. Falling away from THE faith, not faith, falling away from the faith, Christian faith, that is to say the content of the gospel. They fall away from the gospel, from the truth under the influence of these liars.

Now this is not good, even though God overrules it and uses it to purge the church. Turn to 2 John again for a moment as we just kind of sort through these things. I intended to go a little further than I'm able to tonight. But in 2 John 7, many deceivers have gone out into the world. There are many of them out there. And invariably they do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. They always assault Jesus Christ. They've always got some spin on Jesus Christ that's contrary to the truth. This is a deceiver, an antichrist. Verse 8, "Watch yourselves, watch yourselves, be on guard about this so you don't lose what you've accomplished, so you may receive a full reward." Anyone who goes too far doesn't abide in the teaching of Christ, if you follow those false teachers, and you don't stay in the truth of Christ, you do not have God. Same thing exactly that we saw in 1 John 2:19. "If you don't stay faithful to Christ, you do not have God. If you do remain in the true teaching, you have both the Father and the Son."

So in one sense we have to guard the church against the false teachers. In the other sense, even though we're protecting and guarding so that we can honor the truth which honors God, we realize that when lies come, lies cannot cause true believers to abandon the faith. What the liars do is collect the people who are professors but who are not possessors, the false Christians and draw them to themselves and thus purge the church.

It doesn't matter what Satan does, God overrules it, doesn't He? He overrules it. And verse 10, "If any one comes to you and doesn't bring this teaching, don't receive him into your house. Don't greet him. For the one that gives him a greeting participates in his evil deed."

If somebody shows up and has the wrong view of Christ, don't say, "Come on in and let's have a cup of coffee, and we'll talk." Get rid of him, they're the workers of Satan. They're the workers of Satan. They will not destroy your faith but they may assault your confidence. And weaken your devotion to the truth. If you even ask them into your house, that is to say if you welcome them, do anything to aid them in their enterprise, even greet them, you're a participator in their evil deeds.

You know, I take that literally and I want to be as kind a person as I can be. But false teachers cannot receive my kindness. I cannot say anything to them that is kind. I cannot wish them well. I cannot greet them, or I become a partaker in their evil deeds. I'm only left with one thing and that is to confront them. Watch yourselves. But just know this. Anybody who buys into the lies about Christ does not abide in the teaching of Christ, that is to say everything that Christ is and taught, the true Christ, the true gospel..doesn't have God. When somebody leaves this church, I don't care how long they've been here, to go into a false religion, they never were saved, they don't have God. They may affirm the deity of Christ, but deny the gospel of Christ. If you add all this together, you must affirm that Jesus is who He is, the anointed Messiah of God, that He is the Son of the Father, that is God, one with God, that He is God in human flesh, that is He is the God/Man perfectly human, perfectly divine. And here you must affirm not only who He is but what He taught...the gospel.

So John says, "Look, you can tell the antichrists, they leave the church." Don't question why you stayed, you stayed because you're real.. You stayed because you loved the truth. You stayed because God protected you because you're one of His own. You stayed because God by His Holy Spirit has given you the will to persevere, because God has given you a new nature which abides, which remains, which continues, which doesn't default, and doesn't betray and doesn't rebel, and doesn't revolt, and doesn't abandon the truth.

Well, the first characteristic then of these antichrists is that they do not remain. They do not stay. And they do not stay because they are not real. They depart from the fellowship. Secondly, they deny the faith. Secondly, they deny the faith. And I think this is pretty obvious. We've already looked at it, verse 22 and 23, "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, this is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father, the one who confesses the Son has the Father also." And again he goes back to the Christological test. It's always this, true Christians have the right view of Christ, His person, His work, and His gospel. The people who affirm that are the true Christians. The ones that don't are not...are not.

We've been talking a lot about this. Not only do you have to believe in Christ to be saved, contrary to what is now popular, that you can just believe there's a God up there somewhere and go to heaven, not only do you have to believe in Christ to be saved, but you have to believe in Christ who is the true

Christ revealed in Scripture...not just your own version of Christ. Not only do you have to believe in Christ, but in Jesus Christ who is the anointed promised Messiah of God, who is both God and Man, and you have to believe what He taught about salvation, the true gospel. And if you don't, you don't know God and you don't have the Father. You can see here again that the Father and the Son are linked, the Antichrist is the one who denies the Father and the Son. You can't deny the deity of Jesus Christ without denying the God who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is a trinity, He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If you deny the Son, you deny God, the God who is trinity. And if you deny the Son, you don't have the Father. That is to say, if you reject Jesus Christ, you do not know God because there is only one God and that is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's how He designates Himself in the New Testament.

To say that Jewish people who believe in the God of the Old Testament are accepted into God's Kingdom is not true because they deny the Son, they therefore deny the God who is Father and Son. So if you deny the Son, you don't have the Father. If you confess the Son, you have the Father. There isn't any way to the Father except through the Son. There isn't any true understanding of God unless you understand the God who is God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is one in essence with Christ. This again is this marvelous and critical doctrinal test for a true Christian. You can't be in God's Kingdom unless you confess Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Look at chapter 4 verse 2, "By this you know the Spirit of God, every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. And whenever a spirit that comes that does not confess Jesus is not from God but is the spirit of Antichrist."

Always, folks, you come back to Jesus Christ. There were all kinds of bizarre views and still are of Jesus Christ. There is the popular and common view that He was just a man, not God. That's intolerable. He is the Son of the Father, the second member of the trinity, He is one with God. He is God. "I and the Father are one," He said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." "I work and the Father works," that is to say we both work, at the same time we work because we're one. There were those and still are who deny that Jesus is God, that is Antichrist.

And there are those who deny that Jesus is man. As we saw in the passage just read, there are those who deny that Jesus is come in the flesh, 2 John. We looked at it in verse 7. There are some who believe in a...how can I say this?...in a Christ spirit but deny that He ever took on real flesh. This...this was a common view around the time of John's writing. In 100 A.D., that's four years after John died, and John wrote these epistles in the nineties of that first century, so right around that time there was a development of a...of a view connected with a man named Syrinthias(?), later became known as a Gnostic view, and that view...well it's been around for a long time in Greek thought that there was this sort of divine floating Christ's spirit, this sort of spiritual entity, this sort of divine powerful presence that was ethereal and spiritual and supernatural. And Syrinthias believed that, and sort of affirmed this Syrinthian view that John is addressing here, that this floating Christ's spirit

descended on the man Jesus at His baptism and left about three years later, just before He died on the cross so that Jesus, the Jesus spirit, the Christ's spirit just came and went temporarily so that Jesus is not God fully incarnate in human flesh, but He is just a man temporarily granted this divine spirit. Syrinthian heresy, of course, was fought against by the church and conquered.

So there were some who said He was just a man and not God, and there were some who said the Christ's spirit is just a divine spirit and not human. Whatever side of that error you'd like to land on, the results are exactly the same. A denial of the incarnation, a denial that Jesus is the God/Man, any denial of that or of the fact that He is the Messiah of God, the promised King, prophet, priest, Redeemer, Savior, any denial or alteration of the teaching of Christ, as we saw in 2 John, constitutes an anti-Christ spirit. You cannot repudiate Christ in any sense without putting yourself on the side of Antichrist. And so we...we see then that antichrists depart from the fellowship and they deny the faith.

Third thing they do, they try to deceive the faithful...they try to deceive the faithful. And we'll end with this one. Verse 26, "These things I have written you concerning those who are trying to deceive you." It's an unsuccessful effort, but they try. They may toss us to and fro, and blow us around with these winds of doctrine, but they cannot make us not sons of God. They cannot...cannot lead us astray ultimately. They can foul up our simplicity of devotion to Christ, they can tamper with our confidence. They can raise doubts in our minds. But they cannot take away our eternal life. They cannot destroy our faith. They may weaken it, they may make it fragile. If we doubt, the Scripture says, He remains faithful. If we deny, He will...what?...He'll deny us. A true believer under the onslaught of false teachers will not deny Christ, though we may struggle with doubt.

John says I'm telling you all these things, I'm writing all this because I'm aware of those that are trying to deceive you, trying to make you think they have the truth. And they weren't able to convince these people of the truth, they had the enlightened knowledge, they had the elevated, remember it's kind of a pre-Gnostic idea, they have the transcendent insight, the transcendent knowledge. They know the truth about Christ, the supernatural truth that you common hoi polloi don't know. They have grasped the glorious transcendent truth and they have pulled together all the other people who grasped that transcendent truth and they have left the church because you will not come along and embrace the truth. And you're sitting here worrying and fretting that maybe the truth has abandoned you and now you're stuck and you've got your doubts and you just need to know I'm writing to you because I know they have tried to leave you in this position of being deceived.

And I'm just telling you, the very fact that Christ was attacked by these people, the Christ that you know to be the Christ of Scripture, the Christ that God has revealed, the very fact that there's relentless attack on the nature of Jesus Christ as to His deity and humanity and Messiahship, the very assault on the essence of His teaching in the gospel should prove to you that He's the Messiah and it is the last hour. Why else would this be going on? And they left, not because they had the truth, they left because they didn't have it. And they took with them the rest who didn't either. And this is a purging

and a purifying of the church. They are exposed as the false by their departure.

Of course, their ultimate end is tragic...tragic. In 2 Peter chapter 2 Peter talks about them being reserved for the day of judgment. Terrible words of judgment in that second chapter of 2 Peter. These false teachers are described in such graphic terms, we'll save it for next time.

So in the church, Satan will sow antichrists, deceivers and false teachers. Not necessarily in a local church, it happens here, it's tougher here because we're strong in the Word here and we've overcome the evil one in that sense. But he sows these liars in the church at large, doesn't he? And very successfully. In fact, there are virtually whole denominations, Christian, quote/unquote, denominations that exist today that are made up of nothing but antichrists. People say, "Well, you know, it's too bad about all the mainline denominations going liberal." No it isn't. All the liberal churches, all the dead Christ-denying churches should be separate from the real church, right? So that we know that they are not of us. If they had been of us, they never would have left. And the issue is always Christ.

Well, so does John describe the antichrists, next Sunday night we will look at the other side and see how he describes Christians. Let's have a closing word of prayer as we end our day together.

It's been a wonderful day, our Father, in Your Word and Your people and in worship and in praise and fellowship and testimony and service to You. All we can say is that we're grateful beyond words that You have seen fit to rescue us, to give us the knowledge of the truth which we could not attain to on our own, knowing that the natural man cannot understand the things of God. We have absolutely no capacity to come to the knowledge of the truth. How we bless Your name and praise You and thank You that You have given us that knowledge. You have opened our hearts and minds to understand. You have given us an understanding of sin and our sinfulness so that we confess our sins and You forgive them. You have given us an understanding of Christ, who He is, why He came, what He did, what He said. And that the truth that is in us is permanent, it cannot be taken away and the evidence of that truth is that we remain faithful, that we abide, that we stay while those that are not of us leave following the lies and the deception.

We can think of many people in our church through the years who are gone, gone into false religions, gone into cults, and gone into the whole antichrist spirit of the world itself, having nothing to do with anything religious, led away by lying and deception and demonic doctrine, deceitful spirits, hypocritical liars. And while on the one hand our hearts grieve for them and we would pray that You might be gracious to them, on the other hand we're glad for the cleansing. We're glad for the purging because we know that it is a pure church, it is a powerful and a blessed church. We pray that we might be that church.

But before those that aren't real are drawn away, before they're magnetized and attracted to lies, God, how we pray that if there are people in this church who have not yet embraced Jesus Christ fully, or have not yet come to the end of themselves and in self-denial and a willingness to take up their cross and follow Him, acknowledged Him as Lord and Savior, may they do that now that they might enter into eternal life and be secured in that powerful persevering faith that You grant. We pray, O God, that there would be some like those who gave testimony in baptism tonight were around the church but didn't know You. We pray, O God, before they are drawn away into some apostasy, some final defection, they might come to the full affirmation of the truth in salvation in Jesus Christ. May they cry out for that salvation from a penitent heart and ask that You would grant them the gift of forgiveness and eternal life and full faith to receive it. This we pray that You might be honored in the salvation of those who are the recipients of Your grace who then forever and ever will praise You through all eternity because You're worthy. These things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ and everyone said...Amen. Our prayer room is open to my right by the exit sign, if we can help you personally, please feel free to come. Good night.

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