

MONDAY 17 October 2022 "Antichrist"

(1 John 2:18,19; 2 Thess. 2)

Hello, my "Walking with Jesus" friends on this Monday,

In the world in which you and I live, almost every day, we are faced with the harsh reality that opposing views, on almost every possible topic, separate people and often draw them into disagreement or even conflict. Of course, on the world stage we see horrible, vicious, bloody conflict in many parts of our world and bombed buildings, smoldering cities, mass graves and millions of refugees, are some of the carnages of these wars. We also see it with gang violence in cities around the world, don't we?

"**Anti**" is a word we've heard a great deal for the past few decades and often it's a rallying cry that quickly gathers a crowd who in short order get energized. Often words aren't enough, and mob emotions take over and soon bricks are flying, windows are shattering, blood is flowing, and things are out of control.

This weekend I promised you we'd rejoin the apostle John as he's writing the second chapter of his first letter and he has just written these words: ***"Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come... They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us."*** (1 John 2:18,19)

Let's begin with those last two sentences. *John is making it clear that some of these he calls 'many antichrists' are people who once were part of those who called themselves Christians, but they turned away, they rejected Jesus and the Gospel, and began opposing the "Jesus movement".* That radical change is an indication, John says, that despite their previous claim to have been Christians they never really were 'born again' by the Holy Spirit of God. They never were authentically redeemed by the blood of Jesus, or adopted into God's family, or forgiven of their sin, or cleansed from the sin damage in their life, and the Holy Spirit had never taken up residence within them. Throughout this letter, John is calling us to consider the evidence of the authentic, life transforming work of God in a person through their salvation experience, *and also consider the danger of a person assuming they are 'born again' when in fact they are not.*

What do you think of when you see that emotionally charged word "**antichrist**"? Who is John talking about here? But do you notice John also uses the phrase '**many antichrists**'? For some of you, your blood pressure just went up several points. Why? When John says ***"...even now many antichrists have come"*** he is saying that in his lifetime, both when he was a disciple of Jesus and in the years since Jesus ascended back to heaven, John had seen, with his own eyes, many, many people very strongly opposed to Jesus.

He calls them "**antichrists**" because they opposed Jesus and everything about Jesus, especially His Gospel message of salvation by faith. If we use that definition of '**antichrist**' then I have no doubt that you and I, just like John, can easily identify '**many antichrists**' alive and vehemently opposed to Jesus, by every means possible, in our day, maybe in your town and mine!

John referred to these '**antichrist**' people again in his second letter: "**Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.**" (2 John 7,8) Here John gets quite specific. '**Antichrists**' vehemently oppose the incarnation of God. The fact that Jesus Christ IS God the Son, the second person of the Trinity God, and that in His incarnation, Jesus took on every aspect of humanity EXCEPT our sinful nature, is anathema to '**antichrists**'. But Jesus, while here on earth, was fully God and fully human! (Phil. 2:5-7; Luke 1:35)

*That my friends is God's truth, and it's central to our Christian faith, and any person who rejects this truth or opposes it has the spirit of '**antichrist**'.*

Do you ever wonder why some people are so aggressive in their opposition to Jesus? What is it about Christmas or Easter that would motivate people to do almost anything to eliminate these two annual celebrations from every society in the world? What is it about the Bible that would make some people so angry that they'd do almost anything to restrict the Bible from public view or from any public reading or even insist that it be banned from every aspect of society life? What is it about the glorious Gospel of Jesus that would motivate people to ridicule the Gospel, and oppose the Gospel at every turn? I think it all boils down to one thing... *we, sinful, prideful, selfish human beings don't want GOD or anyone else telling us that we are sinful. Our sinful nature prefers evil rather than good, darkness rather than light, deceit rather than truth, harm rather than help. Our sinful nature is self-destructive, yet we refuse to recognize that and in our sinful pride we vehemently reject God because God rejects sin and Satan and all that is evil.*

That's what Jesus said as John recorded in John 3:16-19. So, our world is filled with people in whom is a sinful nature and when that sinful nature rises up in direct opposition to God or to Jesus and His Gospel, then they are displaying a '**spirit of antichrist**', according to 1 John 4:3.

But did you notice John was saying something else when he wrote: "**you have heard that the antichrist is coming...**"? Do you notice John is here talking about ONE person, "**the antichrist**"? Who is that? John is speaking of a specific person who is described in several places in the Bible as a great enemy of God, the personification of evil, who will rise up to global prominence, in full opposition of Jesus Christ and His Gospel, near the time of the return to earth of Jesus.

The apostle Paul describes this '**antichrist**' as a '**man of lawlessness**'. In 2 Thess. 2:1-4 Paul writes: "**Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him, we ask you not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some report...that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you... for that day will not come until...the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."**

Paul further describes this '**man of lawlessness**', this '**antichrist**' in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10 "**...the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the One [the Holy Spirit] who now holds it back will continue to so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one [antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming. The coming of this lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved."**

Oh, my friends, do you see three great truths here for us to grasp?

First, the Holy Spirit of God, at work in and through God's people all around the world, is the power of God holding back the evil power of Satan and the rise of the '**antichrist**'.

Second, the '**antichrist**', '**the 'lawless one**' will be revealed as distinctive from other evil people by '**the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders...**'. This '**antichrist**', empowered by Satan himself, will have the ability to do remarkable counterfeit miracles which will amaze the world and deceive those who are not saved by Jesus from their sin and do not have the Holy Spirit of God living within them, giving them God's wisdom.

Third, you see John's **summary statement** about these who will be awed and impressed by the deception of the '**antichrist**'... "**those who are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved.**" (2 Thess. 2:10)

While the Bible gives us much more information about the work and person and power of this '**antichrist**', in Daniel 9, Zechariah 11 and Revelation 6 & 13, I think we'll pause right here to ponder these powerful truths. Do you hear a warning from both John and Paul? A warning to take seriously this '**spirit of antichrist**' which is so prevalent around the world as people oppose God and God's Word, the Bible, and Jesus and the Gospel? I urge us to spend some time with Jesus right now, gaining a fresh and accurate understanding of this great danger all around us, and we'll come back here tomorrow to dig more deeply into this matter of the '**antichrist**'.

Today's Scripture is 1 John 2:18, 19 & 2 Thess. 2.