

# 1 John 2:18-29 Who is the antichrist?

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This morning from our study in 1 John we are going to take a look at who is the antichrist?

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In the early 1980's end times preaching or eschatology was very much an emphasis within the church around the world. There was quite a bit of excitement that we were getting close to the very end and the rapture of the church was imminent.

There was plenty of teaching on the one world economy, the mark of the beast and who the antichrist might be.

Some speculated that it was the pope of the time while others thought that Henry Kissinger might be the antichrist.

The book 'The Late Great Planet Earth' by Hal Lindsay was a best seller and the church was abuzz of excitement about the end times.

Today you hear very little on this subject and almost nothing on who the antichrist will be. It seems to have died a death.

From the passage that we will be working our way through this morning John is warning about the antichrist and antichrists and I believe from the context of 1 John that the antichrist is not what or who we thought it would be back in the 80's

Let's read the text.

1 John 2:18-29

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.

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--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.  
 28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.  
 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

The word antichrist is only mentioned in John's letters - twice in this passage and twice in the following verses.

1 John 4:3

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.

2 John 1:7

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.

It is in my opinion quite clear from these verses that there is no single antichrist but rather there are deceivers who have an antichrist spirit. There have been and are many antichrists.

Back in the 80's when everyone was speculating about the antichrist they were in fact referring to a passage from 2 Thessalonians that is more correctly interpreted as the man of lawlessness or the lawless one who will exalt himself as God.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-10

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 is revealed, the son of destruction,

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.

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

6 And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

9 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,  
10 and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

John is talking about something different here. He is talking about people who believe that Jesus is not God in the flesh. He is refuting their teaching throughout this entire letter and is quite strong in his judgement that these people do not belong with us as verse 19 says.

1 John 2:19

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.

Now, you might be asking why all the fuss? Surely you can be a good person and believe that Jesus was an excellent moral example, a great teacher, but not God?

Isn't Jesus on equal terms with Ghandi, Mohammed, Confucius and Buddha?

The simple answer to this is NO!

Jesus is all together 'other' to these people.

- All of these guys died. Jesus died and rose again.
- All of these guys sinned. Jesus was tempted in every way and yet was without sin.
- All of these guys never claimed to be God. Jesus not only claimed equality with God but demonstrated it in miracles and by forgiving people's sins.
- None of these guys claimed to exist before they were born. Jesus claimed to be alive before Abraham was born.
- None of these guys saw their deaths as being sacrificial to save sinners. Jesus knew that this was his ultimate mission.

Jesus is so vastly different to these guys that unless a person comprehends this difference through revelation from the Holy Spirit then they are without hope and do not belong to him. Eventually they will leave as they perceive that somehow we are too exclusive believing that Jesus is the only way to God.

The great deception of our day is universalism. That is that every religion leads to God and everyone will live forever and have eternal life.

This is an antichrist spirit. The bible is clear the one who does not have the son does not have the father. And if you do not have the father and the son you do not have the promise of eternal life.

If people do not believe that Jesus is God in the flesh then they are antichrist in spirit and do not belong with him. Some religious groups that we are all familiar with today and are antichrist in spirit are: Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Muslims.

If you ever find yourself in a discussion with any of these people then you don't need to discuss anything else other than this one point. They will no doubt try to get you away from this topic because this is the absolute crux of the Christian faith and they are antichristian (although the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses will strongly deny this), but don't be deceived by their smooth words or their intimidating style. They are in error.

Now why was all this important then and why is it important now?

In the long run being antichrist reduces Jesus to being just a great moral teacher and example, but denies him the power to save.

It would leave us with the hopelessness of trying to follow a great moral example thinking that somehow we might put God in our debt with so called good deeds that we manufacture, so that it is he who owes us and not us who owe him.

The truth is that Jesus came to save sinners, those who realise that God will never ever be in their debt but rather they will always be in God's debt and it is by his sheer grace and mercy that our sins are forgiven and we have the promise of eternal life.

Those who have been born again know this because as John says we have an anointing from the holy one and it is this anointing that leads us into all truth.

Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the father except through me".

Don't settle for a substitute there is only one way and Jesus is that way.