

Antichrists and the Children of Christ

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[0 : 00] Our passage this morning is 1 John chapter 2, verses 18 through chapter 3, verse 10. Before we start, just a sound check. Does that sound good for everybody?

Good. Verse 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. 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.

But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. 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. 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. No one who denies the Son has the Father.

[1 : 04] Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 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.

And this is the promise that he made to us, eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 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.

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

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. And so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

[2 : 13] Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been appeared. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness.

You know that he appeared to take away sin, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning, and no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

[3 : 16] By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

Let's pray. Lord, this morning we ask for your help as we open up your word and as we study this passage. Lord, we pray that you would shape us, that you would teach us, that you would encourage us at this time.

Lord, that your word would be a sword and cut through what needs to be cut, and also lift up and strengthen those who need to be strengthened.

God, help us with distractions. Help us to focus on you. Help us to learn what it is to abide in you. And we ask these things in your holy name. Amen. Amen. I'm going to take keys out of my pocket because I play with them.

So I'm going to get rid of that distraction. We live in a very strange time, as you guys know. A lot of things that we've had our whole life, that we've taken for granted, for the moment has been taken away.

[4 : 35] And you guys know this. I'm not telling you anything new. These things have been taken away in a way that we probably wouldn't have thought about before. Freedoms taken away.

For safety reasons, our traveling freedoms have been greatly limited. For safety reasons, our church doesn't meet together in one spot. For safety reasons, we can't go to our normal workplaces and our classrooms.

Sitting down and eating at a restaurant with friends. We just can't do that right now. For the time being, we live in a very different, a very strange world.

And it drives us crazy sometimes, right? It's also depressing at times. But this life keeps going. And what are we as Christians to do with that?

What are we to think or act? How are we to live in the midst of this new silence and yet global chaos?

[5 : 42] And that's what I want to dig in and pull out from our passage this morning. As we look at a couple things. We're going to be looking at the Antichrist and the children of Christ.

How are we to live in these last days? And where do we find truth and eternal hope? The idea that John has given us from this passage this morning is this.

He wants us to be warned of Antichrist. And we'll get into that. But he wants us to be reminded of the hope that we have in following the real Christ. Now from that statement, you can guess that we'll be talking about two different people.

We'll be talking about the Antichrist. That is those who oppose Christ and followers of Christ. And for those two groups, we're going to be looking at who they are, how they live.

And from that, we'll be able to know what they believe. So let's start with verse 18. It says, Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come.

[6 : 51] Therefore, we know that it is the last hour. This word children, as Sean has mentioned before, is one that John has used in 1 John over a dozen times.

It's not derogatory. It's not looking down, but it's loving. See, John is one of Jesus' disciples who's now an older elder in the church. And he has this love, this fondness for the people in the church. And so he calls them children. Children, it is the last hour, that is the last days. This is the time after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

But before Jesus comes back, and that time of judgment. That time is the last days, this last hour that he's talking about. Hebrews 1 says, Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. We live in the last days. John is speaking to the people in the church of Ephesus in the last days. We're in the last days.

[7 : 57] And there is this Antichrist. What is he talking about? Near the end of the last days, before the final judgment, we can read in the Bible and in several passages that there will be an Antichrist.

One who rises up and has power and authority from Satan. And the world will follow after and worship this person. I'm not going to get into that right now because we'll save that for when we go through Revelation.

But John here is making us aware of two things that are connected. One is, in the end, there is an Antichrist that is coming. But before that time, right now, in our time, in John's time, there is a spirit of the Antichrist that is here and among us.

It's at work. It's that battle that we feel, that spiritual battle between God and Satan, evil and good. John is concerned that the churches in and around Ephesus are going to be pulled into the teachings of these Antichrists.

[9 : 07] That is, those who are teaching something that is against what Christ has taught. So he's saying, we've heard that the Antichrist is coming and many forerunners of that Antichrist are already here and among us.

So be warned and be on guard. The next verse starts to explain why. And it kind of should grab our attention a little bit.

Let me explain as we read it. Verse 19. He's talking about people who were part of the church. People like us from the outside that look like are part of the church. People who worshiped and fellowshiped together. People who were in community groups with one another. They were people that left the church.

And why? John says, because they were not of us. Because if they were, they would still be with us. So we can pick up here that there's this divine purpose for why they left.

[10:25] And that's to become evidence to us that they were not part of us. So the test here is they did not remain. That's how we know. That's the first characteristic.

Now obviously we're not talking about people who have moved on. People who have have gone to another church, moved to another location. And we aren't necessarily talking about people who never truly believed in Jesus and fell away from the church.

Although that would fit here because someone who doesn't believe, there is an aspect of denying Jesus. That is true. But here, John is warning us specifically about a certain group of people.

Let's jump to verse 22 and we'll take a look at that. 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. And this is the group that John wants to warn us against. Those who leave the church and those who deny that Jesus is the Christ.

[11:28] No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. So John is talking about people who have left the church who have denied Christ but that's not all.

Looking at verse 26, it says, I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. So they didn't just leave the church but they were looking to deceive others by peddling a false Christ, a counterfeit.

They are seeking to infect others and further spread the spirit of the Antichrist that is already present in the world where we live. How was the church then and how is the church now protected against this deception?

Yes, we are protected by God. That is true. We could give it that pat answer but John wants us to get more out of it than just saying we're protected by God. How are we protected by God? Looking back at verse 20, but you have been anointed by the Holy One and you all have knowledge.

What does he mean first by the anointed by the Holy One? If we look back to the Old Testament, the anointing of someone that took place was this outward sign that something was happening as well as an inward change.

[12:53] So 1 Samuel 16, 13 says this about when David was anointed king. It says, Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers.

And the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. So there was anointing physically but there was an anointing by the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 1, 22 says, And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us and who has also put his seal on us and given us his spirit and our hearts as a guarantee.

So John is saying that we've been anointed with the Holy Spirit. And this signifies an inward transformation that has begun. This is not a work of us but one of God.

And because of that, he says, You all have knowledge. Verse 21 says, 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.

So their guard then and our guard now against these deceptions is the anointing work done by God and the knowledge of truth that we have been given through that.

[14:07] We have been given the truth and there is no lie in it. It isn't a true story unless it's completely true.

The real truth means that there's no lie in it. I think of if someone goes to court and they go to testify, the promise that they have to make is I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The reason why is as we all know, sometimes we've told stories and we'll twist it just a little bit.

Maybe we'll leave something out. Something, a slight variation, usually to make us look better or to take some of the fault off of us.

But this is not the truth. That's because it has a little bit of a lie in it. And so John is telling us the truth that we have been given has no lie in it.

That's how we are able to guard against these false teachings by that knowledge that we have through this anointing. If we look at verses 24 and 25, it says, Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you.

[15:19] 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 us, eternal life. He repeats that word, abide, three times just in those two verses.

To abide, meaning to remain or to dwell in. Let the gospel that you heard from the beginning remain and dwell inside of you.

If the gospel of Christ remains in you, then you will remain in Christ and in the Father. And the promise from that is eternal life. Think of the end of John 3, 16.

Whoever believes in Him being Jesus will not perish but have eternal life. the truth about Jesus Christ abides in us. And when we abide in Him, there is eternal life.

And that's a promise. That's a God promise for us. Verse 27. But the anointing that you receive from Him abides in you and you have no need that anyone should teach you.

[16:26] But as His anointing teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in Him. So the anointing talked about in verse 20, this anointing by the Holy Spirit from which we have knowledge, that knowledge we receive, that knowledge abides in us.

What knowledge is He talking about here? He's talking about the gospel, the gospel-saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. That's what we've been given in that anointing, the knowledge of who Jesus is, His God incarnate sent to earth to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross.

It's His victory over death and sin, His ascension back to heaven. It's not knowledge of some counterfeit Christ, but it's a true, authentic Christ.

That's the knowledge that we have from our anointing, our indwelling of the Holy Spirit that has come on us. It opens our eyes and it gives us this knowledge that we didn't have before.

This is Holy Spirit God work that is taking place. This is not a work of man. This is not something we can go and achieve and find out. No person can do this. When John says, you have no need that anyone should teach you, it doesn't mean that we don't need anyone to teach us about God.

[17:52] We don't need anyone to teach us about the Bible or how we live. That would go against many verses in the Bible about teaching one another and what the scriptures are used for.

It also doesn't make sense because here we find that John is teaching us something. So why would John say, you don't need a teacher as he's teaching us? So that's obviously not what it means. He's talking about the knowledge that we receive from God in the beginning.

That knowledge when Christ opened our eyes, that anointing that took place, no one can teach that to us and that knowledge does not change.

The truth about the authentic Christ, the cross, the gospel message, that remains the same. In verse 21, he says, because you know it.

You are given it, you know it, and we don't move away from that message to anything new. There is no new truth. There's no new way of following God. There isn't, it's not like technology that we have that gets old, it gets slow, and so we want a newer model.

[18:59] There are features that we're missing out on. This knowledge that we've been given strengthens us, it helps us, it builds our faith, it helps us to abide in Him, and never changes.

The Holy Spirit that works and moves in each of us will never move beyond or be contrary to what the Bible teaches. I'm going to say that again just so that you hear, the Holy Spirit, the work that the Holy Spirit does in each one of us as Christians will never move you beyond or contrary to what the Bible teaches.

So if you're being led towards something or someone that the Bible teaches against, you need to check that because it's not of the Holy Spirit. That foundational knowledge is true, and we are to abide in that truth.

So we talked about the Antichrist, those who deny Christ, and how we are guarded and should be on guard against them.

The second part of our passage this morning, we're going to be looking at what it means to follow the real Christ. Guarding against Antichrist, following the real Christ, and the hope that is ours in that.

[20 : 16] As we look at what it means to follow Christ, John is showing us two groups of people. He's showing us children of God. He's also showing us children of the devil. How you live will indicate which one of those groups you are in.

You're a child of God or you're a child of the devil. As John ends chapter 2 and moves into chapter 3, he continues this concept of abiding. Verse 28, And now little children, abide in him so that when he appears you may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame of his coming.

We are to abide in him, to continue in him, in the truth that we have been taught and given from the Holy Spirit. And if we do, then we are confident when he returns.

Why? Because confident that we remain in the truth until he came back from us. We can't be confident if we left and we followed another truth. Verse 29, If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

In other words, we, children of God, know that Jesus is righteous. And we also know that all who do what is right are God's children.

[21 : 40] Romans 3.10 says this, None is righteous, no not one. No one understands and no one seeks after God. He is the righteous one.

Those who practice righteousness are born of him because in and of ourselves we don't follow after righteousness. So for us to do that, we have to be born, born again, of Christ.

So it takes us to chapter 3. And it starts off with a beautiful verse about our true identity.

Verse 1, See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God and so we are. It says, See what kind of love.

What do we see? What love have we been given? We've been given the name of being called children of God.

[22 : 40] And not just called that, but he also adds, and we are. We are children of God. In our life, we are called different things and we are known to different people in different ways by functions that we do, by areas where we serve, roles that we play.

But as a Christian, if you trust in Jesus, above all those things for all of your life, you are known as a child of God. If you trust in Jesus and you believe in him and you remain in that truth, you are a child of God.

God finished, or God, John finishes the verse with this statement. He says, The reason why the world does not know you is that it did not know him.

John chapter 1 verses 9 through 11 says this, The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

This is talking about Jesus coming to the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own and his own people did not receive him.

[23 : 56] So it feels weird at first where John tells us that we are children of God and then he follows it up with the world doesn't know us because it doesn't know him.

But really, they're connected if we think about it. We shouldn't be surprised because children of God is not something that the world knows. We aren't to be surprised when people don't understand our call to follow Christ.

when we step out in faith and trust in God when there is nothing humanly visible to put our hope in. And that's what we're called to do. When we're called to be examples of showing forth the love of Christ instead of living for ourselves, the world will not understand this because the world does not know the God who is calling us to do these things.

Next, John reminds us again of our identity in verses 2 and 3. Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared.

But we know that when it appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

[25 : 16] What we will be has not appeared yet. is what he's talking about is our glorified bodies. That is not taking place yet.

We know that. Bodies that will never get old, never get sick, never get cancer, never wear out. And to be completely done with sin, it will be glorious when we will be like Christ.

when those two things are taken away, death and sin. And sometimes, depending on the day, we're not sure which one is worse.

Sometimes they both are. Sickness and pain in ourselves, pain and death in other people that we love. On other days, our struggles are with sin.

our daily battles against pride and anger and lust. We see the struggles in ourself. We see the struggles in those around us.

[26 : 25] And it makes life hard. But we know that God has us here in 2020 during this pandemic for a purpose.

But we also can't wait until death and sin are no more. John says, when He appears, we will be like Him.

At that moment that Christ our Savior comes back, we will be like Him, changed forever and no sin in us. Our thoughts, our opinions, our actions, our speech, they will be pure and sinless.

There will be no temptation towards things of the flesh. There will be no weakness in our body.

There will be no flaws, no disease. We will be perfect, filled with the Holy Spirit and in complete communion with God, our Maker.

We will be like Him because we shall see Him as He is. New glorified bodies seeing God in a way we've never seen before.

[27 : 39] Why? Because we've never been able to see like that before. To be able to see with sin and death and pain gone from us.

The way God intended us to see Him in the beginning. He follows that up in verse 3. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

That is, if our trust is in Him, we will want to be like Him. That's part of the sanctification work that the Holy Spirit does in us, in each one of us.

We know that when Jesus comes back, we will be like Him and our bodies glorified. We also know that He is pure, meaning He is holy and undefiled.

He is without sin. Everyone who hopes in Him, who truly believes in Jesus Christ and what He has done for us, purifies Himself.

[28 : 40] That is, we try to live holy. We try to live undefiled as Jesus is holy and undefiled. We practice holy living.

We practice at being pure because Christ is pure. and Christ is coming for us. In verse 4, we see another group of people practicing something different.

We know that Christ is, sorry, wrong paragraph, everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness.

This is in verse 4. Sin is lawlessness. Lawlessness is what it sounds like it is. It is a condition of being without law.

In this case, we're talking about God's law. So to be lawless is to be without God's law, whether by ignorance or deliberate violation against it.

[29 : 41] And that's what verse 4 says is sin. Sin is lawlessness. Sin is to be without God's law. You don't want it. You're ignorant of it. You have your own law.

That's lawlessness. That's sin. Verse 5, you know that he appeared in order to take away sin. John the Baptist testified to this at Jesus' baptism in John 1.

He says, the next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and he said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He came to take away sins by dying on the cross, by taking our punishment and paying the price for our sin.

That's what makes it possible for us to repent and to ask forgiveness. And in that, our sins are taken away. And then the rest of verse 5 says, And in him there is no sin.

We know this. He could not have died for us if you had any sin in him. 2 Corinthians 5.21 pulls those truths together in this.

[30 : 58] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin. So that in him we might become the righteousness of God. He did not know sin and his sacrifice made it possible for our sins to be taken away.

We know that Jesus came to take away sin and we know that in him there is no sin. And that is the great thing to know. But what do we do with that knowledge that Jesus had no sin and he took away our sin?

How does that affect our daily living? sin? Look at verse 6. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

We talked earlier about abiding. That is to remain or dwell in Christ and the knowledge of who he is. If we remain in Christ then we cannot keep sinning.

They oppose each other. They both can't happen together. It is like saying you remain healthy and you keep getting sick. You can't do both. There is a connection between the words abiding and keeping.

[32 : 07] You can't abide or remain in one thing while keeping and remaining something else. You can't remain honest while keeping up a lie. Both cannot happen.

And John helps nail this down for us. If you keep on sinning you cannot know him is what he is saying. Genuine Christians that know God that abide in Christ because they believe in who he is cannot make a practice of sinning because they are making a practice of abiding in Christ and we can't do both.

That practice to practice something is to continue in it. To do it repeatedly on a regular basis or pattern. A lot of times it is to get better at something.

I want to get better at guitar so I will practice it. I want to get better at running so I run more. So if you practice or make a practice of sinning you cannot be a child of God.

What do you do with your sin? Is there a sin that you're practicing and not fighting against? A sin that you're not letting go of?

[33 : 17] Do you hide it? Do you continue in it? Maybe perfect it so people don't notice it and you enjoy it more? That's what it is to practice sinning.

Verse 7 he says, Little children let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous as he is righteous. John is going after two things here.

One is the false teaching of the Antichrist. and we didn't get into it earlier but this was part of what the false teaching was about at this time. That the son of man remained spiritual and never came in a physical form.

They were separated. So by implication our spiritual beings remain separate from our physical being. To be more specific the Antichrist were teaching that their spiritual life was disconnected from their physical actions.

So they could have a pure spiritual life and their sinful physical actions didn't affect it. They could be righteous but not practice righteousness.

[34 : 29] John says no, this cannot be. The nature of our spiritual life is shown in our physical actions. Who we are in our hearts will come out in how we act.

If you're children of God, you will act and have a life like you were a child of God. If you are a child of the devil, then you will live that way.

You will practice sinning. You will not want the law of God. You will want lawlessness. What we believe comes out in how we live.

If you follow righteousness, that is Jesus Christ, then you will practice righteousness. sinning. The other side of that, in verse 8, it says, whoever makes the practice of sinning is of the devil.

For the devil has been doing it from the beginning. Like we read in verse 4, if you practice sinning, you practice lawlessness, and that is rebellion towards God.

[35 : 33] The rest of verse 8 says, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. So he came to take away sin, we just talked about that, and he came to destroy lawlessness and rebellion against him.

Back in verse 1, we saw the kind of love that we've been given. We are called a child of God. In verse 2, called God's children. And now in these last two verses, verses 9 and 10, John goes a little deeper with that concept of being a child of God.

Verse 9 says, no one born of God, meaning no child of God, makes a practice of sinning. This points out what we saw earlier, that there's a category of people that are born of God.

It is those who practice righteousness. Why? It's not because any of us have some innate level of righteousness in ourselves. Verse 9 goes on to tell us, it's because God's seed abides in him.

The meaning of that could be a couple different things, both of which are true, and they're connected together. God's seed could be the word of God that brings salvation. It could mean the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life as a Christian that brings about our regeneration.

[37 : 00] Both of those are actions that take place on every person who is born again. God's seed abides in him.

That is born of God, and that's why we are called children of God. 2 Corinthians 5.17 says, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

Old has passed away, behold, the new has come. We cannot keep sinning and be born of God, just like we cannot abide in Christ and continue to walk in sin.

It is from your life, your actions, even the intents of your heart, because we can't all see each other's heart.

We can be seething one another. We can look good, but have a sinful heart. In those things, in our actions, in our intents, and in our life, we show who we are.

[38 : 03] Verse 10 says, by this, practicing righteousness, or practicing sin, is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil.

Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. So as we look at this passage, as we see that John wants to warn us against this deception of the Antichrists that are among us, and wants to remind us of the hope we have in following Christ.

Our question today to think about is, what do we practice? What do you practice? Do you practice righteousness? Do you practice holiness?

Do you practice those things because you have a God who died for you and is coming back for you, who has called you a child of God and loves you? Or do you practice sinning?

Do you practice doing the things that you want to do and not living for God? Do you work at making righteousness your habit, your routine for living?

[39 : 26] God, let's close in prayer. Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for the promises that you give us of what it is to be a child of God.

And Lord, at the same time, we need correction to keep us from doing what we want to do, going after the things of this world that bring death, going after things that pull us away from who you are. So Lord, we pray that you would help us as we think about this passage, as we meditate on the thought of what we worship and where do we abide?

Do we abide in sin? Do we abide in righteousness? Do we look to you at a time where we can see no hope in anything else? When things that we thought were solid begin to fade away and are taken away from us?

Does our trust and our hope in you remain knowing that you have given us eternal life? Knowing that you have called us children of God? And so we are.

[40 : 36] Lord, I pray that you would help us with that. I pray that you would comfort us in those truths this morning, Lord. We pray these things in your holy name. Amen. Amen.