

# “Christ, Antichrists, and Followers of Christ”

(1 John 2:18-27 ~ Part 1)

## Introduction

➤ It does not take a genius to see that the world in which we live is a fallen world (1Jn.2:2:15-17; Gen.3; Rom.8). Therefore, it should not surprise us to see (mainline) “Christianity” decline into worldliness and liberalism, nor should it surprise us when professing Christians commit apostasy (i.e. to fall away from the Christian faith [recently, there has been a number of high-profile “Christian” leaders who have renounced their faith in Christ or their belief in Christianity. I think we will likely see more of this as biblical Christianity continues to fall out of favor with our society/culture, making it no longer comfortable or profitable to be a Christian]).

For we are repeatedly told in Scripture that this world is under the curse of sin, and under the rule of Satan (1Jn.5:19; Eph.2:2). Additionally, we know that Satan is real, and is working to tempt, deceive and destroy. He is a prowling lion “*seeking someone to destroy*” (1Pet.5:8). We are not to be surprised, but we are to be prepared. We are called to be vigilant against all the various schemes of the devil (2Cor.2:11; Eph.4:14; 6:11), and the demonic attacks that come from his minions – antichrists and the antichrist.

**Eph 6:10-13** ~ “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup>For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup>Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”

➤ As we will see, antichrists and apostates are nothing new. Ever since the fall, Satan has loved to deceive people away from truth of God and destroy their faith in God; Satan longs to counterfeit whatever God is doing. Throughout the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, we read about false prophets, false priests, false teachers, false gospels, false shepherds, false christs, false apostles, and false believers/Christians.

➤ This is very topic of the passage of Scripture we will be studying this morning.

**1 John 2:18-27** ~ “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. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. <sup>24</sup>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. <sup>25</sup>And this is the promise that he made to us – eternal life. <sup>26</sup>I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. <sup>27</sup>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.”

➤ In this passage of Scripture, the apostle John addressed the antichrist/antichrists, and true followers of Christ. It reveals various truths about the antichrists, and the true followers of Christ.

## A. Who are the antichrists?

➤ The Greek word translated “*antichrist*” (*antichristos*) literally means “anti-Christ” (plural, “*antichrists*”; vs.18), that which is opposed or contrary to Christ [used five times in the NT, only by the apostle John, and only in John’s epistles (1Jn.2:18<sup>2x</sup>, 22; 4:3; 2Jn.7)].

**1 John 2:18** ~ “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.”

**1 John 2:22** ~ “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.”

**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 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.”

➤ So, in a general sense, the “*antichrist*” is anyone or anything that is opposed to, or at enmity with, Jesus Christ. This certainly includes Satan (2Thess.2:3-10; Rev.13:11-18), but also anything or anyone who is doing the work of Satan (see Jn.8:41, 44; Phil.3:18).

✓ Illust: “Through the centuries, there has been much study and speculation, by both scholars and lay persons, concerning who this final Antichrist will be. People have proposed numerous historical figures, including Nero and other Roman emperors, Muhammad, various popes, Napoleon Bonaparte, Benito Mussolini, and Adolf Hitler. Such ill-advised speculation has always proved futile. When the apostle John wrote this letter, he said many antichrists had already arisen in the brief sixty years since Pentecost, and countless more have plagued the church until now” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1, 2, 3 John*; 1Jn.2:18-27).

➤ Scripture is filled, in both the New and Old Testaments, with warnings concerning false prophets, false teachers, and false believers in the church (i.e. within Christianity)!

**2 Peter 2:1-3** ~ “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup>And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup>And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”

Jude 4 ~ “For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

**2 Cor 11:13-15** ~ “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.”

**Gal 2:4** ~ “Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in – who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery”

**Acts 20:29-30** ~ “I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup>and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”

➤ We are exhorted to wise and discerning, not foolish or naïve. We must be constantly alert, grounded in the Word of God, on guard against any false teacher or false teaching. We simply cannot afford to be gullible nor ignorant. We have been warned repeatedly to beware of false teachers – even within the

church. We must not think that we are somehow immune to, or beyond, being deceived (see 1Cor.10:12; Gal.1:6; 3:1).

**Matt 10:16** ~ “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

➤ Notice that the apostle John (writing words inspired by the Holy Spirit of God; 2Tim.3:16; 2Pet.1:21) wrote that *“it is the last hour”* (vs.18<sup>2x</sup>). Here he is referring to the imminent Second Coming of Christ. But this can be confusing since “1 John” was written about 2,000 years ago! The *“last hour”* (*eschatos hōra*) is simply a reference to an indefinite period of time – i.e. the time between Christ’s First Coming (or His resurrection) and His Second Coming.

✓ **Illust:** “All of Old Testament history prepared the way for the work of Christ on the Cross. All history since that time is merely preparation for ‘the end,’ when Jesus will come and establish His kingdom. ... ‘The last hour’ began back in John’s day *and has been growing in intensity ever since*. There were ungodly false teachers in John’s day and during the intervening centuries they have increased both in number and in influence. ‘The last hour’ or ‘the last times’ are phrases that describe a *kind* of time, not a *duration* of time. ... In other words, Christians have *always* been living in ‘the last time’ – in crisis days” (Warren Wiersbe; *Be Real*; p.84-85).

None of us know how long this *“hour”* will last (see Matt.24:36; Acts 1:7), but we know that we are closer to the Second Coming of Christ today than ever before! All things are in complete harmony with God’s sovereign will, and will the “end times” will happen exactly as God has planned. In God’s Word, we are repeatedly exhorted to always be prepared for Christ’s return (2Tim.3:1; 1Thess.5:2; 2Pet.3:11-12).

➤ John is not telling them anything new, he is reminding them of what they already *“have heard”* (vs.18). He does, however, teach them some truths concerning the identity and mission of these antichrists. In this passage, we find four descriptions of the antichrists.

1. They are *“many”* (vs.18)

➤ First, John noted that *“many antichrists have come”* (vs.18). Again, the (singular) *“antichrist”* (vs.18, 22) is ultimately a reference to Satan (or *“the spirit of the antichrist”*; 1Jn.4:3), but also refers to those whom Satan possesses in an attempt to dethrone God – to destroy the works of God and deceive the people of God. To be sure, the final *“antichrist is coming”* (vs.18), but there have been and will continue to be many antichrists who come to wreak havoc on the church of Christ.

**Matt 7:15** ~ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves”

**Matt 24:5** ~ “For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray.”

**Matt 24:11** ~ “And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.”

**Phil 3:18-19** ~ “For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup>Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”

**James 4:4** ~ “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

➤ Arguably, the *“spirit of the antichrist”* (1Jn.4:3) is upon us like never before, as our nation/culture spirals into worldliness and godlessness (see Rom.1:18-32). As Christians, while not giving into fear or despair, we must be aware that we are indeed in the *“last hour”* (vs.18), and many antichrists have already come, and many will continue to come against the true church of Jesus Christ.

### 2. They are false teachers / false Christians (vs.19)

- Ultimately, in a general sense, any “*antichrist*” is essentially a false teachers, false prophets, false apostles, false messiahs, and false Christians. In speaking of the antichrists who have come, John wrote: *“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”* (vs.19). Here we see that the antichrists are, or at least were, professing Christians! While they were never truly saved, these false teachers proclaim (or once proclaimed) to be Christians.
- It is vital to understand that the antichrist, and the antichrists, will attack the church from within the church. That is, they will identify themselves as Christians and find for themselves positions of “spiritual authority” within Christianity – not necessarily from atheistic or anti-Christian groups.

**2 Tim 4:1-4** ~ “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup>preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

- Scripture tells us that they are wolves “*in sheep’s clothing*” (Matt.7:15; cf. Acts 20:29); they are false teachers “*disguising themselves as apostles of Christ*” (2Cor.11:13); they are “*evil people and imposters*” (2Tim.3:13); they have “*the appearance of godliness*” but are in fact godless (2Tim.3:5).  
Satan’s scheme to lead Christians away from the truth of God’s Word through false prophets and false teachers, has been his M.O. since the creation of mankind (see Gen.3:1-6; cf. Deut.13:1-5; Ezek.34:1-10). According to Jesus, Satan is “*a liar and the father of lies*” (Jn.8:44; cf. 2Cor.11:14). Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples about false prophets who would come trying to lead people away from the truth of God (see Matt.13:18-23).
- As Christians – while not being judgmental – we simply cannot afford to be gullible, ignorant, or undiscerning (Acts 17:11). Not everyone who professes to be a Christian, is actually a true believer in Christ (not every “Christian” ministry, church, artist, author, athlete, or preacher is truly/faithfully Christ-centered, Bible-centered, and/or Gospel centered). We must always bear in mind that false believers can infiltrate the church in order to undermine the authority of God’s Word, distort the Gospel of Christ, and/or create division within the fellowship of believers.  
Unfortunately, under the guise of Christian unity and love, Christians are all too willing to accept any so-called Christian leader, speaker, song, book, or movie. Consequently, many Christians are willfully ignorant and gullible to Satan’s deceptions. To be sure, Christians are not to be judgmental (see Matt.7:1-5) but they are to practice good judgment and be discerning (see 2Cor.10:4-6; Eph.4:14; 1Thess.5:21-22; 1Jn.4:1).

### 3. They deny Jesus as the Christ (vs.22)

- A third description of the antichrist, and all antichrists, is that they deny Jesus as the Christ: *“Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son”* (vs.22). Clearly, this is not some minor or secondary issue or doctrine.
- In describing “*false prophets*” (*pseudoprophētēs*) and “*false teachers*” (*pseudodidaskalos*), the apostle Peter referred to their clandestine teaching as “*destructive heresies*” (*apōleia hairesis*), or “*damnable heresies*” (KJV):

**2 Peter 2:1-3** ~ “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive [*apōleia*] heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction [*apōleia*]. <sup>2</sup>And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup>And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction [*apōleia*] is not asleep.”

Such heresies are “*destructive*” (*apoleia*), meaning damnable or utter ruin, illustrates the severity of their false teaching.

**Matt 7:13** ~ “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction [*apōleia*], and those who enter by it are many.”

**John 17:12** ~ “While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction [*apōleia*], that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

**Phil 3:18-20** ~ “For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. <sup>19</sup>Their end is destruction [*apōleia*], their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”

➤ The teaching of these false teachers – “*the antichrist*” (vs.18, 22), and those who are “*antichrists*” (vs.18), possessed with the “*spirit of the antichrist*” (1Jn.4:3) – is damnable; it condemns them and will condemn all who follow them.

**Gal 1:8-9** ~ “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed [*anathema*]. <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed [*anathema*].”

➤ This is because they actually “*den[y]* that *Jesus is the Christ*” (vs.22). This does not mean they denied the (historical) existence of Jesus (of Nazareth), but they rejected the truth that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior of the world [“*denies*” (*arneomai*); renounce, deny, disown (vs.22<sup>2x</sup>, 23)]. That is, they deny the true nature of Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man (Col.1:19; 2:9), and therefore reject Him as the one and only Son of God and one and only Savior from God.

**2 Peter 2:1-3** ~ “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup>And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup>And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”

**Jude 4** ~ “For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”

➤ The truth is, any denial, deviation, or distortion of the scriptural view of Jesus Christ constitutes the spirit of antichrist. This heresy of liberalism is still alive today, and rampant in our contemporary culture. People, even professing Christians, readily admit that there was a man named Jesus who lived in Palestine in the 1<sup>st</sup> century – who was a good, moral, wise man (i.e., a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish Gandhi) – but they adamantly refuse to believe that He was fully God, that He was born of a virgin, that He performed supernatural miracles, that He died on the cross as the substitutionary sacrifice for sin, or that He rose from the dead. Those who embrace the heresy that Jesus is not the Christ, often conclude that the biblical accounts and teachings regarding Jesus were exaggerated by His followers or hijacked by overly zealous religious people.

➤ Furthermore, and consequently, they also “*den[y]* the *Father and the Son*” (vs.22). The rejection of Jesus as the Christ is tantamount to a rejection of God. A person simply cannot have one without the other. The true and sobering point is this: You cannot be ‘right with God’ if you are wrong about Jesus Christ. In other words, you cannot have a right and saving relationship with God, unless you have a right and saving relationship with God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

There is no other way to be saved, no alternate path to God. For Christ is the one and only Savior sent from God (Jn.3:16). He is not only the only one who did die for your sins, but He (as fully God and fully man) is the only one who could have died for your sins. Salvation comes through God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone! (Jn.14:6; Eph.2:8-9; Acts 4:12).

**1 John 2:23** ~ "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also."

**John 5:23** ~ "... Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."

**John 8:42** ~ "Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.'"

**John 14:6** ~ "Jesus said ... 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" [note the definite article 3x; "no one" (*oudeis*) not even one, not a single person]

**John 10:30** ~ "I and the Father are one."

**John 15:23** ~ "Whoever hates me hates my Father also."

- Whether they admit it or not, false teachers have rejected Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords. They have refused Jesus as their Savior, and declare themselves free from His Sovereign rule and authority. Consequently, they are condemned by God as their "Christianity" is a sham. They may know about God, but they do not truly know God. They may be in church, but they are not in Christ. They may profess Jesus, but they do not possess Jesus. They may be very religious, but they are utterly unsaved.

#### 4. They try to deceive true Christians (vs.26)

- Deception is the "name of the game" for all false teachers. Since they are under the demonic influence of Satan, they are liars and deceivers (see Jn.8:44; 2Cor.11:14-15).

**Matt 7:15** ~ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

**Matt 24:5** ~ "For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray."

**Matt 24:10-13** ~ "And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. <sup>11</sup>And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup>And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

**Matt 24:24-25** ~ "For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. <sup>25</sup>See, I have told you beforehand."

- Again, we need to be aware of and vigilant against Satan's deceptions. We cannot afford to be ignorant, naïve, or undiscerning. This is one reason why we must be prayerfully and humbly steeped in the Word of God.

**2 Tim 3:12-17** ~ "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup>while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

<sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

**Col 3:16** ~ “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

- We must love the Word of God – both incarnate and inspired! We are called to read it, study it, meditate on it, memorize it, and live it. It is our spiritual sword (Eph.6:17; Heb.4:12), able to defend against the lies and deceptions of the devil.

### **Conclusion**

- We must continually be on guard against deceptions of the antichrist/antichrists, watching both our lives and our doctrine closely (1Tim.4:16).

**Heb 10:23-25** ~ “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

**Heb 12:1-2** ~ “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

**2 Thess 3:3** ~ “But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.”  
(Jd.1:24-25; 1Pet.1:3-9)

- Once again, God does not call us to be afraid of Satan, but to faith in Him. As Christians, we must remember 1 John 4:4 – “*Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*” We are not to fear the antichrist, or the many antichrists, but to “*abide*” in God (see 1Jn.2:19, 24, 27, 28; see Jn.15:4-10).