

I John - the Antichrist

by Mariano Di Gangi

The Antichrist is a person or entity that denies the Christian faith and opposes Jesus Christ, but those who are anointed with the Spirit will persevere and put their trust in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 20:29

Scripture: John 4:23-24, John 8:32, John 14:6, John 17:17, 2 Corinthians 4:4, 1 John 2:19, 1 John 2:27

Topics: "Antichrist"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being enlightened by the Holy Spirit to discern between truth and falsehood. The perspicuity of Scripture is highlighted, which means that even a child can understand the essential truths of the Gospel with the help of the Spirit. The speaker warns against separating oneself from the Christian community, as it indicates a lack of true belonging and inheritance in the kingdom of God. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the need to acknowledge and embrace the truth of the Gospel, to discern and reject falsehood, and to trust in Jesus Christ for reconciliation with the Father.

Transcript

Our text is taken from today's scripture lesson, from 1st John, the second chapter, concentrating on verses 18 through 23. In particular, the saying of the Apostle John, This is the last hour, and as you have heard, the Antichrist is coming. When we hear such talk, that this is the last hour, that this is the wrap-up and the final phase of human history, and that the Antichrist is coming, what's our reaction to be? With some, it's a reaction of panic.

With others, a matter of deep depression over the gathering darkness. With others, a call to speculation, and to indulge in the vagaries and the weird and bizarre world of fanatical interpretation or misinterpretation of Bible prophecy. Is the Antichrist a movement? Is the Antichrist an institution? Is the Antichrist an individual? Who is this Antichrist who is coming? Well, down through the centuries, a variety of answers have been given.

Among the church fathers, for example, Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, the version known as the Vulgate, Jerome said that the Antichrist had to be Nero, resuscitated. Theodorette said, no, the Antichrist is the incarnation of the devil. The Christians of the 8th century had no doubt at all on this subject.

As far as they were concerned, it was the movement of Islam and the prophet Muhammad that together as institution and individual constituted the Antichrist because of the invasions that were launched and because of the conquests that were made by the edge of the sword to that great faith. If you ask the reformers who or what is the Antichrist, Luther and Calvin and Wycliffe and Huss and even some of the spiritual Franciscans within the Church of Rome would have said it's the papacy as an institution and some of the popes in particular because of their worldliness, their greed, their lack of seriousness about the basic issues of the faith, and their personal immorality. And if one had said that against Pope Alexander VI, one of the Borgia popes, whom even Roman Catholic writers described as a monster, one could see why the reformers thought that way.

But of course the Church of Rome returned the compliment and felt that because Luther had fragmented the unity of Christendom, that he was the Antichrist. By the year 1810, evangelical writers in Britain had their mind made up. The Antichrist simply had to be Napoleon.

After all, he was causing bloodshed all over Europe, his purpose was to reunite all of Europe under his power, and he had made an alliance with the Pope, and he was dead set against the defeat of Britain, which is the last great bastion of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism in that era. You move on to our own century, and a man who founded one of the largest, most evangelical and mission-minded congregations in all of Canada writes a book in 1926 in which he predicts that by the year 1934, the old Roman Empire is going to be revived around the shores of the Mediterranean, and the dictator of Italy, the fascist leader Benito Mussolini, will likely emerge as the Antichrist. 1934 came and went, and we're still in expectation of that final embodiment of all moral and spiritual evil as predicted by the Apostle John.

Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Hitler, even Henry Kissinger, and the European common market have been guessed at as the possible Antichrist. Now, whatever institution will ultimately emerge as the Antichrist, or whoever that individual may be who will be the personal embodiment of all this evil, we are sure of this, that according to the Apostle John, the spirit of Antichrist and manifestations of what is anti-Christian were already abroad in the world of the first century A.D. Because what he says is, this is the last hour, this is the final phase, this is the wind-up, the last act of human history. The Antichrist is yet to come, but even now many Antichrists have already come.

But what does he teach us about them? He draws a tremendous, sharp contrast between those who are anti-Christian and those who are pro-Jesus Christ. Let's examine the text bearing in mind that particular contrast. What does he say about the forces that are Antichrist? What does he say about the movements and individuals who are contrary to Jesus Christ, who are opponents to him? Well, for one thing, they depart from the Christian fellowship.

He says, they went out from among us because they didn't really belong to us, and it was by going out from us that they demonstrated that they never really were part of the Christian community. Beware of breaking with the Christian community. Beware of separating oneself from the Church.

Beware of drifting away from the Church of Jesus Christ. Because that demonstrates that an individual was never a member of that body. It shows that one is no longer an heir of that kingdom.

It means that that individual is no longer a branch of the true vine. It means that that person breaking away from the Christian community is no longer a sheep within the flock of the Good Shepherd. That that individual is no longer a child in the family of God.

The surface seemed to be that way, the appearance seemed to be that way, but in actual fact that person was never really part of the true people of God. Instead of defecting, that person would have persevered in fellowship with the Christian community. And so the first mark of those who are anti-Christian is that they sooner or later depart from the Christian fellowship.

They went out from us and demonstrated in this way that they never really were part of us. And the second characteristic is that they not only depart from the Christian fellowship, but they deny the Christian faith. Notice again what is said in verses 22 and 23.

The man who denies that Jesus is the Christ, such a man is the Antichrist. Such a man is anti-Christian. He denies the Father and the Son.

Now that's a very serious charge, and it's a matter of the utmost importance. And if we forget everything else today, let's remember at least the exposition of this particular point, because it's absolutely basic. A person who denies that Jesus is the Christ demonstrates by that very fact that that person is anti-Christian.

Now what does it mean to affirm that Jesus is the Christ? It means to affirm that Jesus has been consecrated by an act of the Father to be the Messiah, to be the infallible prophet, to be the merciful priest, to be the sovereign king of his people. To say that Jesus is the Christ means to recognize that he is the infallible prophet who makes known to us the will of God for our salvation in his inspired and authoritative word. It means to recognize that he is the answer to the problem of our sin because as a merciful priest he presents an offering on the altar of the cross to cover our sin and to make atonement for sinners dying in our place.

It means that on the third day he broke the bonds of death and raised from the dead, he ascended to heaven to be crowned with many crowns, to be Lord, to be known as the King of Kings. Now to deny that Jesus is the Christ means saying I do not accept him as my infallible prophet. I do not take his word as the revelation of the will of God for my salvation.

I disregard what he says in holy scripture and I write my own script and live my life accordingly. The rejection of the inspiration and the authority of the scriptures in which the infallible prophet makes known God's will for our salvation marks that person to that extent as being anti-Christian. Moreover there is the matter of the rejection of Jesus as the merciful priest who pours out his life as a ransom for our sin and as an atonement for us sinners.

For the person who says I do not have any sins that need atonement or the person who says I can find other ways of gaining the forgiveness of God other than by putting my trust in Jesus who died in my stead, that person rejecting the sacrifice of our Savior is to that extent anti-Christian. Jesus is the Christ because he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and anyone who says I will go my own way and I will do it my way and I will disregard what he has to say to govern my conduct is to that extent rebelling against the King of Kings and denying the Lordship of Jesus Christ and is to that extent anti-Christian. It's not only departing from the Christian fellowship but denying the Christian faith.

By refusing to have him as my prophet I will not enroll in his school and be his disciple. By refusing to rely on him as my Redeemer I have no sins that need cleansing and if I do I can find some other way besides Jesus to straighten out my account with God. To say that though God has made him Lord and King I will run my life my own way.

The denial that Jesus is the Christ is a mark of anti-Christian thinking and it's also the denial of the father and the son relationship for Jesus claimed not only to be a religious teacher but he claimed to be the embodiment of Almighty God. He says the invisible God after whom you grope and for whom you seek has been made clear, has been revealed in me. He who has seen me has seen the father and to deny that intimate father-son relationship is to rob the son of his eternity and to deny his divinity and to refuse to acknowledge that he is the perfect revelation and embodiment of the invisible God and to that extent to be anti-Christian.

John Calvin summed it up right on target when he said God has given himself to us to be enjoyed in Christ. If you seek for God elsewhere than in Christ you seek in vain. There is no God apart from him.

And now with a sense of relief and to a briefer extent we turn from the manifestations of an anti-Christian attitude to that which is described by the Apostle as being pro-Christ. Adhering to him, committed to him, trusting him, obeying him. Those who are for Jesus Christ are described as anointed with the Spirit.

This Spirit comes from the Holy One, Jesus Christ. And when he gives his Holy Spirit to us the dimness of our spiritual sight is taken away. Our blindness is remedied.

We become enlightened in the best sense of the word. We begin to see the difference between truth and falsehood, between what is right and what is wrong. Many mysteries still remain.

And yet on the things that have to do with the essence of the gospel we have a clear perception and we will not be deceived concerning this. Anointed with the Spirit whom Jesus gives our darkness is dispelled and we are preserved against deception and we are no longer like spiritual children so naive as to be carried to and fro by every wind of doctrine but we know what the score is on the things that matter most. That is what the framers of the Westminster Confession call the perspicuity of Scripture.

There are many mysteries in Scripture but on the fact that I am a creature, that I am a sinner, that Jesus is the Savior and that I am saved by repenting of my sin and trusting in him even a child can understand that when the Spirit is at work within the heart and mind. One does not have to have a doctorate in divinity, one does not have to be a graduate of the most erudite theological seminary to know that Jesus loves me and the Bible tells me so. That I am a sinner, he is my Savior and by embracing him with the hands of faith my account with God is squared away and I have pardon and peace.

Anointed with the Spirit, we become aware of the truth and we know what is true. Jesus said of his disciples, you shall know the truth and the truth is the word of God. Jesus says in John chapter 17 Sanctify them through thy truth.

Thy word is truth. But it does more than refer to God's written revelation. In John 14, 6 he says, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.

And therefore if we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit we will come to an understanding and an appreciation of the basic truth of the gospel and we will come to know and appreciate the Christ who is cradled in the scriptures, our Lord and our Savior. And we will be able to discern, we will be able to distinguish, we will become men and women of discrimination, the only place where discrimination is permissible and mandatory, namely in embracing truth and rejecting falsehood, inciting with Christ and never against him. We acknowledge the Son and the Father whom he reveals and the Father to whom he reconciles.

Whenever the Antichrist comes, whether sooner or later, we will not be deceived, but we will persevere because anointed by the Holy Spirit we have come to see the truth, have learned the central message of the gospel and put our trust in Jesus Christ. The final word will not be with Antichrist, but with Jesus Christ. Blessed are those who put their trust in him.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the revelation of yourself that you have given to us in the person of your Son, Jesus Christ. Enable us to acknowledge him as the infallible prophet at whose feet we may sit and from whose mind we may learn.

Enable us to see our sinfulness and to rely on him alone for our salvation. Grant us the vision of his crowned majesty that we may submit to his authority and obey his will until at the last we behold him face to face. In his precious name we pray.

Amen.

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