



AHHH, THE ANTICHRIST!

1 John 2:18-22

God urgently desires for all of us to live deeply in Him.

When we first hear or read this passage, we cringe or even feel offended by the intense language. The apostle John is talking about the antichrist and even calling different people the antichrist! Yet the word "love" is mentioned more in 1 John than in any other book of the Bible. I believe when we hear these words, we sometimes miss the heart behind them. And the heart is that God urgently desires for all of us to live deeply in Him.

ANTICHRIST

- History and pop culture have elevated the idea of the antichrist. Throughout the pages of history, there have been accusations of several figures being the antichrist, such as Nero, Hitler, the papacy, Napoleon, and several US Presidents. Pop culture has created movies or TV shows of demonic figures or evil world leaders being the antichrist. Is this portrayal of the antichrist right or wrong? I would say it is mostly wrong.
- John is the only one in all of scripture to use the word, "antichrist." He uses it five times in four verses: 1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3; 2 John 7.
- John is using the idea of an evil end-time ruler from the Old Testament and the words of Jesus. In the Old Testament, Daniel has a vision of four beasts and the coming of the "son of man" at the end of the age (Daniel 7). Jesus refers to "false Christs" in Matthew 24:24, "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible." Paul refers in 2 Thessalonians 2 of a "man of lawlessness," an evil end-time ruler. In Revelation 13, John uses apocalyptic language to speak of "the beast" who will have authority over the whole earth, and many will worship him. So, it is true that there will be an evil end-time ruler, but John seems to be focusing on another use of the word.
- Antichrist, ἀντίχριστος in the Greek, specifically means, *one opposed to Christ*. We also learn from John that the antichrist is coming, has already come, and anyone who denies Jesus is the Christ is the antichrist.
 - "Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come." (1 John 2:18)
 - "The one who denies that Jesus is the Christ..." (1 John 2:22)
 - "Every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus..." (1 John 4:3)
 - Any "who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh..." (2 John 7)
- When John speaks of the antichrist, he is mainly speaking of false teachers in the surrounding churches. And yet, using John's definition of the antichrist as one opposed to Christ, we can say that many world leaders were antichrists, opposed to God, and the ways of Jesus.

URGENCY AND INTENSITY

- Why is John using such urgent and intense language? We see the intensity with the use of the word “antichrist” and the urgency as he mentions “the last hour” (1 John 2:18). John possibly believes the end of the age has started because of the signs mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24.
- There is also an urgency and intensity because of the division within the church, likely instigated by false teachers speaking against Jesus' divinity. We see John speaking of this division in the following verses:
 - v. 19: “They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us.”
 - v. 22: “Who is the liar?”
 - v. 26: “I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.”
- John is angry. False teachers have caused division in the community, but even worse, they have discredited the person of Jesus Christ, God Himself, the Anointed One, the Savior of the World.
- For us to see the **heart** behind the urgency and intensity, we need to view it as a passionate and protective parent. John uses the language of parent-child throughout the book of 1 John, often referring to his readers as “dear children” (1 John 2:18, 28, 3:1). So, John is passionately speaking to the church community, considering there is a battle for their souls.

THE SOLUTION: LIVING DEEPLY IN CHRIST

- The solution is a call to “remain” in Christ. The word “remain” comes from the Greek word **μεινω** and is actually used 24 times in the letter of 1 John. 1 John 2:24 says, “See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.”
- **μεινω** can mean remain, abide, or stay. It is similar to how John uses it in John 15 where he speaks of the vine and the branches, “remain in me and I will remain in you” (John 15:4). God is the vine, and we are the branches; our source for life should be found in Him.
- I am not a huge fan of the word “remain.” It feels static ... like I have “remained” home for extended periods of time during this COVID-19 pandemic. I prefer Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase in *The Message*, where he uses to “live deeply.”
- To live deeply is to be anointed from the Holy One, Jesus Christ. 1 John 2:20, “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.” 1 John 2:27, “But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it has taught you, remain in him.”
- “Anointing” comes from the Greek **χρῖω**, which connects to Old Testament imagery of the priest being anointed with oil, consecrated, set apart for God. Our anointing and consecration come through Christ, **χριστος**, the anointed one.

BATTLE FOR OUR SOUL

- In this world, there is a battle for our souls. Last week Doug spoke of the subversive power of our culture to seduce our affections away from Jesus. Specifically focusing on busyness. I wonder what the battle looks like for you during this bewildering COVID reality. How do you need to live deeply in Christ?
- We all need to start our day in a posture of looking up, aligning our hearts to God. If you look at the lives of spiritual figures and leaders, you will almost always see that they spent at least one hour a day in the morning with God through prayer and the word. I don’t say this to put a guilt trip on you but to give you perspective. If we want to be a part of the source of life for ourselves and others, we need to tap into that source deeply.
- Morning Prayer suggestions:
 - Lord’s Prayer
 - Ephesians 3:16-21
 - Psalm 100
 - Psalm 96