

Abide in the Beginning

1 John 2:18-27

1 John 2:18-27

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.

Introduction

In the very first sermon of this series, I mentioned that John was writing to combat the false teaching of certain people that were disrupting the fellowship of the church. At that time, I stated that the content of the false teaching would become more clear as we progressed through the book of First John. At first, John was simply highlighting the two great commands again: love God supremely and love others sincerely. If one was obedient to these great commands, then they would not love the world or the things of the world, because love for God and love for others was incompatible with the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and pride in possessions. This morning, John is going to turn his attention directly to false teaching that has been implied earlier in his work. Previously, we saw that the false teachers were denying their own sinfulness (**1 John 1:5-10**) and their need for an atoning sacrifice (**1 John 2:2**). Now we find John accusing the false teachers of denying Jesus as the messiah and attempting to lead others astray as well.

Exposition

I. To Not Abandon Christ (Vs. 18-23)

Like a concerned father, in verse 18, John turns his attention to warning his spiritual “children.” At this point, we encounter a term that is only found in John’s epistles, that is, John’s letters as opposed to his gospel and the book of Revelation. The term “antichrist” is only found in **1 John 2:18**, **1 John 2:22**, **1 John 4:3**, and **2 John 7**. In all instances, the term “antichrist” refers to one who denies certain biblical realities about Jesus. In particular, those who bear the description of “antichrist” are those who either deny that Jesus is the Christ (**1 John 2:22**) or they deny the “coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh” (**2 John 7**). In other words, the term “antichrist” refers to those who deny Jesus Christ as the incarnate God who came to save us from

our sin, and according to John, there are “many” of these types of people. For he says in verse 18, “so now many antichrists have come.” Yet, these people are not simply “personal deniers” of Jesus, but, as I said a moment ago, they are also deceivers. Not only do they personally reject Jesus, they encourage others to do so as well. **2 John 7** is very clear in this regard, stating, “For many deceivers have gone 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.”

Now, this is not to suggest that John does not teach that there will one day be a one key person or figure in the “last days” that rises up to oppose Christians and lead many people astray. It seems clear to me that John has a final, end-times figure in mind when he writes **Revelation 12-14**, but that is not his main point in this morning’s passage. Rather, John wants us to see that all who would seek to undermine the person and work of Christ either implicitly or explicitly are working in accordance with the “spirit of the antichrist.” So, when a false teacher either inside a church or a false teacher outside of the church seeks to change the truth regarding Jesus that “we heard in the beginning,” John considers that person to be an antichrist. In other words, anyone who opposes the person and work of Jesus as the One who came to save us from our sin and restore our relationship with God, that opposition is considered to be “antichrist.”

Now, the opposite of those who are “antichrist” is the one who “confesses that Jesus is the Christ.” Without going into too much detail, this simply means that the opposite of being of the “antichrist” is believing and confessing Jesus as Savior and Lord. John explicitly states it like this in verse 23 - “²³No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.” One cannot confess to know the Father without also knowing and confessing the Son, for it is the Son who has revealed the Father to us. As **John 1:18** says, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” And Christians know this is true, because they have been “anointed by the Holy One” and possess “all knowledge of the truth” (Vs. 20). The Holy Spirit has given us the eyes to see and ears to hear the good news of the gospel and respond in faith. We, like John’s audience, have no need of spiritual gurus or secret knowledge about God. For we have been filled with the Holy Spirit that we might discern and understand spiritual things.

Thus, we have no need to abandon Christ. Instead, we ought to abide in Christ.

II. Rather, Abide in Christ (Vs. 24-27)

John exhorts his audience in verses 24-25, saying, “²⁴Let 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. ²⁵And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.” Some false teachers were teaching John’s audience to abandon Christ in favor of other things. They promoted a knowledge of God that was not rooted in Jesus, but rather, in false practices and beliefs. These false teachers were encouraging John’s audience to abandon the simplicity of knowing God in Christ, but John instructed them to abide in Christ, which simply means to remain steadfast in the testimony that they had heard about Jesus from the beginning. The promise for those that abided in Christ Jesus was “eternal life.”

Conclusion

How can we bring all of these details together to make sense of what this means for us today? Well, this morning, John has exhorted us to remain steadfast in Jesus. To continue to believe and embrace the good news of Jesus' work on our behalf and not abandon Him in a deluded attempt to have fellowship with God apart from Christ. John taught us that to attempt to know God apart from Jesus is essentially the spirit of "antichrist." Thus, whenever we deny that we are really a sinner separate from God or we deny that God the Father sent Jesus the Son to cleanse us of our sin, we are acting like little "antichrist."

In this regard, one of the biggest dangers to the church in our day is confusing obedience to God with legalism, which means that we think that by obeying God we are accepted by God. However, we are accepted by God through Jesus Christ alone. By his grace we have been saved, it is not by our works. When we believe that we have been saved on the basis of our works, we are acting like "antichrist" because we are demonstrating through our deeds and actions that we do not think that we need Jesus. And that is the spirit of Antichrist.

Whether you recognize it or not this morning, you need Jesus. We need him desperately. To forgive you and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Don't be an antichrist today, resolved to know and please God in your own strength. Abide the good news that you heard from this beginning, that tells you clearly and simply that you are a sinner in need of God's daily grace in Christ and that you are accepted by the Father on the basis of what Jesus has done for you. Jesus is enough!