

Theme: Faith in Exile

Title: Antichrists Among Us - I John 2:18-29

Aim: Recognizing antichrists & avoiding their deception.

Intro: It's a confusing world, isn't it? There seems to be no end to the countless teachings flying around & filling our world. From evolution to ancient aliens being our origin to reincarnation to gender dysphoria to the earth being flat to the myriad of false religions, it's no wonder confusion reigns in the lives of many. Much of what is taught is against Christ or seeks to combine truth & false teaching, which results in total falsehood (a ½ truth is a whole lie). Of course, the Church is not exempt from confusion, with all the incompatible doctrines being espoused, many of which major on the minors. What are we to believe & where do we turn? Thankfully, God has revealed Himself to us, put His Spirit w/in those who believe & given us His Word to guide us. We don't have to be confused in a world of confusion. Theme: Faith in Exile. As Christian exiles in this world not our own we must be on guard & discerning, sticking w/the truth we've been given. I John 2:18-29 [READ]. Note that John states that "it is the last hour." John lived w/expectancy of Christ's return, looking for His coming w/longing. We should do the same. The phrase "last hour" has the same meaning as "last day" but w/an even greater sense of urgency. John was saying "the midnight cry will soon be heard!" If John thought that then, how much closer are we now to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! We might well say, "it is the last minute!" Jesus is indeed coming soon, tho we don't know when. John issued a warning: I) **Antichrist is coming**. Antichrist means just as it sounds. It means adversary of the Messiah & is generally understood as "one who will come onto the scene sometime before the Messiah's 2nd advent" (Strong's). There are various views about the Antichrist, whether or not it will be a specific person or a political system, such as a government, or even a false religion(s) such as Islam or false churches, etc. It may be a person representing a political system or government or false religion/church. It seems the Antichrist will be a distinct influence in the world in the last days before Christ returns, stirring up end time rebellion against God. Be sure that Antichrist is coming & will surely oppose Christ & the Church, but he/they will not succeed. But as John

pointed out, II) **Many antichrists have come**. The plural indicates many who are not THE Antichrist but do oppose Christ & the Church & offer false teaching & persecution, seeking to turn believers from Christ & the Father. It seems from what John wrote that these antichrists would only increase in number as time goes on, so we know we're in the last days/hour. The sad thing is that many of those who oppose Christ have at one time identified w/the Church/Christian community. Remember the parable Jesus told about the wheat & tares (Mt.13:24-30). An enemy sowed tares/weeds in a man's field & they grew up together, to be separated at harvest time. So it is that some come into the church but are not true believers. They eventually leave the church, demonstrating that they were not of the church. That doesn't refer to those who for whatever good reason leave one church & go to another. They are true believers who are still part of THE Church & become involved w/a church where God plants them. That's not leaving the Church. That often happens for various reasons but we should not be "church hoppers." Those who are not truly of the Church, however, leave the Church & Christ, no longer making an effort to follow Christ. John said, "If they had been of us, they would have continued w/us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us." You've seen it happen over the years, haven't you? Those who seem to love Jesus & the Church all of a sudden stop being part of the church & stop seeming to love/follow Jesus. Just this past year I have witnessed 2 people who seemed at one point to be vibrant Christians simply walk away from the Church & even renounce faith in Christ (not of this church family)! I pray for them that they might repent & return but the sad fact is, they may have never been true believers nor truly of the Church. I firmly believe that a true believer cannot lose his/her salvation, but there are those who think themselves believers who are not, who appear to others to be believers, but are not. I believe John's primary message in this passage is III) **Don't let that be you**. Those in the area around Ephesus, who had been scattered there by persecution, may have struggled w/their lot & began to question their faith, falling prey to the false teaching around them, even from some who had infiltrated the church, who seemed to be believers. John, in his role as bishop, would have noticed

this, been told of this & in this epistle addressed this concern. Maybe you, in your life struggles, have questioned your faith & begun to give ear to the false teachings of the world. If that's so, the message of John to those in the greater Ephesus area applies to you as well, as it does to all of us who are in Christ – vs20-21. “Wait, I know you; I know what you've been taught & by whom (Paul, Timothy, John himself & others). You have been anointed by the Holy One, & you all have knowledge.” The Holy One is Jesus Christ, who anoints every believer w/the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches us the truth of who Christ is (the Son of God & Messiah sent from God) & what He has done, that salvation is in Christ alone. “You know the truth,” John said, “I'm not telling you anything you don't know. I remind you of what you already know.” That's important for us to hear, in the midst of the false teachings flying around us. Don't be moved from the truth you know by the noise of false teaching, no matter how loudly it may be shouted. Truth & lies have no common ground. The lie these Christian exiles were hearing was that Jesus was not the Messiah/Christ. Good man, fine teacher, but not the Messiah of God. Those who made such claims were antichrists in the truest sense of the word. They might have claimed to believe in God but in essence they were denying both the Son & the Father. Can't have One w/out the Other. If you don't believe in Jesus as Savior/Lord, you don't have a relationship w/God the Father, can't know Him who had a plan from the beginning that centers on Christ. If you know Jesus, & confess Jesus – that is, agree w/the truth about Him & profess that He is your Savior/Lord – then you know the Father & the Spirit. John counsel to those exiles applies to us today. IV) **Stick w/the truth you know**. “Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you.” Remember how John began this epistle: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard...” He was reminding them of what he heard & saw & touched (the Living Word of life) & about what they had been taught. “The beginning” here refers not only from the 1st time Jesus came on the scene but also, especially for those believers & for us, to the beginning of our being taught of Jesus, the beginning of our faith journey, when God the Holy Spirit burned the truth into our hearts. John was saying, “Get back to the basics of your faith in Christ.” Part of the basic truth

which we heard from the beginning is God's promise of eternal life. We have sure hope of eternal life in Christ. The Holy Spirit w/in is the guarantee of it. We must abide in the truth, & as we do, we will also abide in the Son & the Father, which is a 2-way relationship. John used that word "abide" 6 times in this passage, pressing home the importance of it & surely remembering the words of Jesus, "Abide in Me & I in you" (John 15). To abide means to stay w/, to live in. David Gudzik wrote, "We protect ourselves against the spirit of antichrist by abiding in the original, core Christian message. As we walk in the simplicity & power of that message (truth of the gospel), we will not be led astray." Of course, in order to abide in the truth we must know the truth. Read/study/meditate on the truth of God's word. Abide or slide – that was the theme of either a youth conference at BCC when I was a student there or a youth camp when I was a teenager. I don't remember the venue but I do remember the message. If we're not abiding in the truth of God's word, we will slide away from the truth & away from God; but if we stay w/the truth, the truth will stay w/us. Then John makes what seems to be a strange statement in vs26-27. "I'm warning you about those who are trying to deceive you. Don't listen to them. You have the Holy Spirit w/in you, & you have no need that anyone should teach you." I believe John is saying to us that the Holy Spirit is our teacher. Listen to Him. This doesn't mean that Christian teaching is not necessary. On the contrary, teaching by other anointed ones in the church is a major means the Holy Spirit uses to teach us. However, we should make sure those who teach us are filled w/the Spirit. The character of our teachers is as important as the content they teach. Both must be true to God's word. But if you didn't have godly teachers, the Holy Spirit would still teach those in Christ, as we abide in the word. So, abide in the truth/Word of God; abide in Christ. Abiding gives assurance. "When He appears (antichrist is coming, but so is Jesus!) we [will] have confidence & not shrink from Him in shame at His coming." Will Jesus find us watching? Will He find us occupied w/His business, which is making disciples? Will He find us loving one another? Will He find us practicing righteousness? The test of abiding is righteous living. Abiding in Christ & abiding in the truth of Scripture will always be

manifested in how we live. “Everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him.” Antichrists are all around us & the Antichrist is coming. The world is full of confusion, but that doesn’t have to deter us or cause us to go astray from following Christ. Stick w/the truth we know, that Jesus is the Christ, God is our Father, we have the Holy Spirit w/in to teach & guide us. The Word of God is our foundation. Abide in the truth; abide in Christ. Yes, it takes faith – faith in exile.

