

## The Anti-Christ 1 John 2:15-29

It's been really cool over the past several months, and years even now, to walk through the New Testament books in chronological order. Can you believe that we've made it almost all the way to the book of Revelation? It's been interesting recently over the past several weeks to read through Peter's letters, Jude, and now John's letters as they have been somewhat preparing us to better understand Revelation when we get there. Today in our passage from 1 John, in the 2nd chapter, we'll be looking at the concept of the Anti-Christ- a figure that very much comes into play in the book of Revelation, and we'll even dip our toes a little into the waters of Revelation as we'll reference what is written about the Anti-Christ there as well, in addition to what we read in 1 John. So we have a lot of ground to cover this morning, so stay focused with me, and we'll get right into it starting in **1 John 2, verses 15-17**.

Ok, so *before* talking about the Anti-Christ, God's word here is giving us a concept to wrestle with that will prepare us for better understanding and being on the lookout for the Anti-Christ. And that concept is: not loving the world nor loving the thing in this world. Now, what does it mean to not love the world? Well, verse 16 further clarifies what is meant- we are not to love the lust of the flesh, nor the lust of the eyes, nor the boastful pride of life. Lust of the flesh- the things that make our bodies feel good (food, sex, adrenaline sports, working out, saunas?) Lust of the eyes- the things we see and therefore want: (beauty in people, cars, possessions, property, etc). Pride of life- the things we do have and have accomplished (work, possessions, money, power, fame, our own wisdom). If we get *enamored* by these things, if we end up loving these things, we will only end up being disappointed, because these things will pass away. These things don't last forever, they will be going away, and if we entangle our affections with these things, our hearts will end up crushed.

But wait, aren't Christians supposed to be all about love? Well, yes. And- is it therefore wrong to enjoy food, a work out, appreciate beauty, celebrate hard work that pays off? No, not necessarily. You see, this is another place in the Bible that we have to ask ourselves, in what way is the text telling us to understand "not loving the world or the things in the world?" There are many Biblical concepts that exist that require a certain level of sensitivity and wisdom,

concepts that aren't black and white formulated into nice neat little packages. This is a concept that we have to continually stop, re-evaluate, and prayerfully ask ourselves: "Am I loving things of this world in the way that scripture is telling me not to love them?" "In analyzing my life perspective, my world view, my motivation in life, the things I am thinking about each day, the way I spend my time, my money- would God say of me that I am obeying this command not to love the world nor the things in the world?" "Am I too focused on just the passing things of this world, instead of on the everlasting things of the Kingdom?" These are the type questions we need to be honestly asking ourselves.

But the one who loves God, who loves His Kingdom, who loves His will- lives forever and gets to hold onto these things loved. And how do we love God the Father? By doing His will. That's what verse 17 says in a round about way, and John will later clarify this specifically in **chapter 5 verse 3** when He writes *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments."* This concept of loving the right things, not loving the wrong things, is a concept that will have particular importance in reference to us getting closer to the time period in which the Anti-Christ will be revealed and Jesus will return for His people. And that's exactly the point John is making through the end of the chapter, that ends with these words in **verses 28 and 29...**

John is telling us to continue to love God and remain in Him, focused on His Kingdom, not being distracted and enamored by the passing things in this world, so that we won't be caught off guard when we are... raptured up to Heaven? Is that what it says? No, it doesn't say remain in Him so that when you are caught up to Him you won't be ashamed when you get there in His presence. No, it says remain in Him so that when He appears (John will later detail out that event in Revelation 19), remain in Him so that when He appears we won't be surprised, ashamed, caught off guard. Because when Jesus returns, those who are loving the world and the things of the world, indulging in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, boastfully prideful of life- will tremble in fear and shame before the almighty King Jesus. Revelation 6 describes this day, at the end of the chapter it says this... *"And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became as black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island*

*was removed from its place. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the eminent people, and the commanders and the wealthy and the strong, and every slave and free person hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the sight of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of Their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*"

It says the kings of the earth, all the eminent people (all the important people, right? That Greek word means all the great people), all the commanders, all the wealthy, rich, strong- all the way down to even the lowliest of slaves, and even all the common people in-between- all these will hide, be ashamed, and wish for death when the sky is rolled up and they see God on the throne and Jesus on His way to the Earth, and they realize they have lived their lives for the wrong things. It will be like in the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve tried hiding from God because they weren't in right relationship with Him due to disobedience and due to investing their loves, their desires, in the wrong place. Let's actually look at that passage in Genesis real quick.

You don't have to turn there, but **Genesis 3:6** says *"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food (lust of the flesh), and that it was a delight to the eyes, (lust of the eyes) and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, (pride of life) she took some of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate."* **Verse 8** then says *"Now they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."*

God doesn't want you to have to shy away in shame when you see Him face to face whether that be when you die and pass from this world, or if you are still around when Jesus returns. You don't have to be like those described in Revelation 6, or like Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, or like the couple spotted on the Jumbotron at the music concert- remain in Him, loving God, doing what's right, focused on the coming Kingdom. And a pretty big warning contained in this 1 John passage would be NOT to say we love God, if we love what is not of God. Loving God the Father in verse 15 goes hand in hand with doing the will of God in verse 17. They're saying the same thing. We express our love for God by doing what He says to do. So don't say you love God, don't say you're saved, don't say you're a Christian- if you're not doing His will.

Alright, we skipped over some verses, let's back up to verse 18- speaking of the end times when we must remain in Him and not love the world as we endure what the Anti-Christ brings, and await Jesus' return, verse 18...  
**(18-24)**

Ok, let's walk this one back, verse 18- we've been living in the "last hour" of time ever since Jesus ascended up into Heaven. All that's left to be accomplished in human history is for Jesus to return and gather His people to Him from the four corners of the Earth. And believe it or not, these little letters of John are in fact the only place in scripture where we have specifically mentioned the term "Anti-Christ." The term is mentioned here in the verses of this passage, then later in chapter 4, and then there's one more reference in John's second letter. But it is quite widely accepted that Paul was referring to the same Anti-Christ figure when writing to the Thessalonians. Here's **2 Thessalonians 2:1-4**, in which Paul doesn't use the specific term "Anti-Christ," but very much describes one who is coming who will be very "anti-Christ." He writes *"Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, regarding the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, 2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit, or a message, or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. 3 No one is to deceive you in any way! For it will not come unless the apostasy (falling away- defection from truth) comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God."* Paul says here that before Jesus returns and we are gathered to Him, that first there will be an apostasy, which means a great falling away from the faith, and the "man of lawlessness" will be revealed, one who exalts himself in defiance of God. If you keep reading in 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul says this man will have power from Satan to perform signs and wonders, and he will deceive many *who don't love God's truth*, but who rather *love worldly wickedness*. (exactly what John is warning us of in verse 15-17) And the passage says that Jesus will eliminate this man and end Him when He returns.

Now there's a little bit of rub in trying to connect Paul's passage to what John writes, since when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians the temple was still standing and Paul mentioned specifically that this figure would sit down in the temple of God. But the temple was destroyed not long after Paul wrote, in the

year 70, and most scholars believe John to have been writing long after the temple was destroyed, somewhere around the years 85-95. So there is some debate in understanding these passages. Was what Paul mentioned fulfilled in the literal Jewish temple, by one of the Romans desecrating it before it was destroyed in the year 70, and so like many Biblical prophecies there was a small scale fulfillment in the near future, but ultimately it would be fulfilled in a grander way in the end times, and perhaps there is to be another temple built in which this would occur? Or perhaps is Paul referring to the “temple of God” in the way that he defines that phrase in 1 Corinthians 3, in saying that we as followers of Jesus are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in us? So the understanding would then be that the “Anti-Christ” in the last days, will “take his seat” amongst the church, and will attempt to deceive the church with miraculous signs, proclaiming that he is God and will deceive many? Or, perhaps a third option would be to take what Paul said as figure of speech- a metaphor- implying the understanding that this figure will do things that would be the *equivalent* to the act of sitting down in the temple and declaring himself as God? Well, before we lean one way or the other, there’s one more passage we should look at, that though it doesn’t specifically say the word “Anti-Christ,” it too like the 2 Thessalonians passage describes someone with the same type of “Anti-Christ” behavior. We’ll look at this passage in more detail later, but let’s take a quick preemptive glance at it, turn with me over to Revelation chapter 13.

Revelation 13, (I don’t have slides for these verses, so grab a Bible and scan it with me-) verse 1, tells us of Satan the dragon (the previous chapter 12 tells us specifically that the dragon represents Satan), who then causes a “beast” to rise up- which seems most likely in the context of the rest of the chapter to be some sort of earthly kingdom, a governmental nation state alliance who rises to authority during the 3.5 tribulation years before Jesus returns. (That time period is mentioned as 42 months in verse 5-  $12+12+12+6 = 42$ ) This beastly nation state entity is able to defeat other nations through war (verse 4), and makes war against Christians, and defeats them as well (verse 7). And it specifically mentions this circumstance will call for perseverance from Christians. (Verse 10) So you got Satan the dragon, you got the “beast” national entity empowered by Satan, and then in verse 11 a second beast is described as rising up from the earth who has two horns like a lamb- signifying someone not very threatening to look at. The guy looks like a lamb, but it says he speaks as a dragon. So in his appearance, general reputation he’ll seem peaceful like a lamb, but his words will

be telling, revealing that he is on the team of Satan the dragon. And it says, verse 13, he'll perform great signs (like what Paul says in 2 Thessalonians), verse 14, he'll deceive those who live on the earth (like what Paul says in 2 Thessalonians), verses 16-17 he'll make everyone receive a mark of the beast- some sort of logo, number, or name representing this earthly nation state in order to buy or sell.

Now, notice there's a semblance in this in comparison to what God has done, there's a perversion of the truth here- for Christians we have the trinity- God the Father Creator, we have Jesus the son who is described as a Lamb who speaks God's words, and we have His Holy Spirit that marks us and unites us into a system of a new nation of Jesus Heavenly Kingdom people. The rest of the world will have an *unholy* trinity of sorts, a deceiving perversion of God's design: Satan the dragon (who is creating this earthly rule), who rises up a "son" who resembles a Lamb yet who speaks Satan's words, and then a beastly spirit marking system of commerce under the control of Satan's earthly kingdom.

This description of the second beast fits the characteristics mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2, that 1 John 2 terms as the Anti-Christ that is coming. These are the 3 passages of scripture that give us a heads up on what to be on the lookout for concerning the Anti-Christ, that also give us the 3.5 year countdown clock to Jesus' return. And in looking at these passages, what I want us all to prepare our hearts for, is the idea that it might not be so obvious as to who the Anti-Christ is, especially at first. The Bible says that many will be deceived, 2 Thessalonians says the deception will be so great that many will "fall away" from their faith, in others words something will be so convincing even for those who call themselves Christians, that they will be lured into believing this earthly focused perversion of God's plan. The miracles will be convincing, the theology will be pretty close, the causes will sound good, the unity being promoted will be enticing, the compromise won't seem such a big deal, the Biblical arguments will be persuasive, etc. I believe many of the arguments will even be like "see, this thing happening now is fulfilling Bible Prophecy." So remain skeptical and rooted firmly in God's word, persevere and you'll be ok. Or as John says back in **verse 24**, back in 1 John chapter 2, he says...

In other words, stick to the Gospel truth that you heard from the beginning of your walk of faith. Don't be led astray by other things that are enticing that

*resemble* the Gospel message, that *aren't* the Gospel message. Don't be led astray by Old Covenant mindsets, don't be led astray by New Age Mysticism, remain in the New Covenant that was presented by Jesus, recorded in the 4 Gospel books- Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

And now that we've read the 3 Anti-Christ passages, let's circle back and see if we can make more sense out of what Paul said concerning the Anti-Christ sitting down in the temple of God. I still don't know if we can say for sure, but in considering all 3 passages it seems pretty clear that we are still to be anticipating someone to rise to power that fits the description- in other words maybe there could have been a partial fulfillment somewhere around the year 70, but there is definitely enough evidence to point us to expect this Anti-Christ to appear on the scene at least 3.5 years before Jesus returns. As to if that requires another temple to be built- *maybe*- my radar will definitely be super tuned in if some sort of physical temple construction occurs in Israel in our lifetime- but I don't think that another temple is necessarily a Biblical requirement for the end times and Christ's return. Paul very well could have been cryptically referring to the believers as the body of Christ when he said the temple of God, or it could have just been a spiritual figure of speech.

Either way, the construction of another temple should definitely NOT be something that we as Christians should be excited about, we should NOT try to cause that to happen, we should NOT be happy about that idea. If another temple is built, it will be the ultimate mockery and rejection of Jesus Christ by the Jewish people, by Israel, by Christians, Muslims, and by whoever else helps to make that happen. Are you hearing me? (There is actually a group currently trying to unite Jews, Christians, and Muslims in order to build a temple for the nations there in Jerusalem, under the unity of adhering to a small set of morality laws termed as the "Noahide laws.") Alarms bells of warning should be ringing in our minds anytime someone mentions a group trying to rebuild a temple in Jerusalem. Let me say it very plainly, many of you aren't going to believe me, it's going to sound very extreme, but it's the truth- here it is so that you can be ready for it: *Any attempt to unite mankind in religion, or in earthly kingdoms- apart from Jesus Christ- will be at it's roots a demonic, anti-Christ movement.*

John says that Anti-Christ is coming, but also that many anti-Christ's have already appeared. Even during his time, there were already many people-

governments, cultures, religions, individuals- setting themselves up against Jesus Christ, and were thus, to a degree, fulfilling the role of the Anti-Christ. This has continued up until even today. You've probably heard it said before that the "spirit" of the Anti-Christ is already amongst us, and that's exactly how John phrases it later in chapter 4 of this letter. Yes, the spirit of the Anti-Christ is alive and well, paving the way for *The Anti-Christ* to sneakily rise to power. Just as Christ will come and we are all "little Christs"- Christians; in that same manner *The Anti-Christ* will come and there already exists "little" anti-Christ's everywhere. In verse 19 John even says that these little anti-Christ's he's referencing were even once part of the fellowship of the church. They were amongst the believers, but they didn't stay there, they didn't persevere, they didn't remain, and so in retro-spect he can now say that they weren't ever truly part of the church. If they had been truly saved, they would still be a part of the church. Those who are truly saved will remain until the end- *sustained faith* is the mark of those who will inherit eternal life in Heaven.

In verse 20 there's a unique play on words that you wouldn't see unless you understand Greek and Hebrew. John has been talking about the "antichristos," the word "Christos" being the Greek word for Christ, which is the equivalent of the Hebrew word *Messiah*, which means "*Anointed One*." Anointed One gives the imagery of one set apart, chosen for special task- as in a man being anointed as the next king. The procedure would be for olive oil mixed with other special fragrances like Frankincense and Myrrh, to be dumped over the head and shoulders of the one being anointed. The result would be a super shiny slick hairdo, the face would glow and glisten, and you could smell the aroma from a mile away. It was a special physical marking of a person set aside for a special God ordained purpose. This was done for prophets and kings, but the Bible describes a *unique* "Anointed One" who would come, whose special God ordained purpose would be eternal, everlasting, never ending. This Anointed One would be the fix all, be-all accomplisher of God's great plan.

So John is talking about the adversary, the opponent, the one who is against this special Anointed One, and he says that there are already many who have set themselves up against Jesus this Anointed One, coming out from even amongst the church- but then he says to the reader: "but you too are *anointed ones*!: You too have an anointing, you are anointed by Jesus *the Anointed One* (the Holy One). He says to the reader- you are not *anti-anointed*, no you *are*



anointed, and you *know*- you have the knowledge. What knowledge is that, what does the reader know? We know the *truth*, as the next verse, 21, says. John's writing to us because we know the truth. And what is the truth? Verse 22- the truth is that Jesus is the Christ! Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One. He is God's answer to all that is messed up in this world.

And then notice what he does at the end of verse 22. John, God's word, here defines the Anti-Christ as the one who denies God the Father and Jesus the Son. Now John was a Jew, his family and friends were Jews, many of the believers he was writing to were Jews- what people group defined/currently defines their culture and identity in knowing and having relationship with the creator God the Father? *The Jews*. But John says here in verse 23 that anyone- Jewish or not- anyone who denies Jesus *does not have God the Father*. This would be a shocking statement to anyone Jewish during John's day, as well as a shocking statement to anyone who considers themselves Jewish *today*. And he takes it a step further, anyone who confesses the Son has the Father also. There would also be many people in the churches during this time, who would be reading this letter, who *weren't* of Jewish background, but who were from other nations and cultures that the Jewish people would have considered *not* to have the revelation of the Creator God through the Old Testament, not having God through the laws, not having God through the prophets, the history- but who now confessed Jesus the Son as their King. And John is saying that these, though they didn't "have God" (*have God* as would have been defined by the Jews), he is saying, no- they actually *do* have God the Father because of their faith in Jesus.

Paul says in Romans 11 that what Israel was seeking, it did not obtain, but rather others obtained it. After Jesus performed a healing for a Roman Centurion (an enemy of the Jews) He said "...*many will come from the east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom (Jews) will be thrown out into the outer darkness.*" **(Matthew 8:11-12)** Jewishness or not Jewishness did not matter any longer- Jesus became the new standard of "chosen-ness." Anyone from *any* nation could enter into right relationship with God, and anyone from *any* nation could be separated from God by rejecting Jesus. Jesus brought in a new era, a new type of Kingdom, a new type of fulfillment and we are to be all about His newness,

letting go of any clinginess to old world systems, old world paradigms, any worldly things that are going to soon become obsolete. Verse 25... **(25-29)**

Again, the focus is to be on what verse 25 says- eternal life. Resisting any one who is trying to deceive you (as verse 26 says)- deceiving in getting you to focus on the things that are *not* of eternal life- the things that are worldly and will pass away- earthly kingdoms, earthly nation states, lust of the flesh and eyes, the boastful pride of life, etc. And as little Anti-Anointing people appear, as the big Anti-Anointing one will be revealed during the tribulation- we are commanded to *remain* in His anointing as verse 27 says. His anointing teaches us, it is true, it is calling us to remain in Him. Why is there this encouragement to remain in His anointing right after all the talk about the one who is the Anti-anointing? It should be pretty clear for us when I say it that way, in the more direct Greek equivalent English words. You probably get the picture here, but to give an analogy- how many of you live here in/around/close to Brevard? Raise your hands- whether that's Pisgah Forest, Rosman, for Pastor Dave and Brenda's sake let's include Etowah... Let's just say for the purpose of the illustration, we'll call all of us who raised our hands "Brevardians." Being a Brevardian is great- we have access to waterfalls, beautiful forests, we avoid the craziness that comes with living in a big city- there's lots of benefits to being a Brevardian. But to all the Brevardians, I am warning you that the Anti-Brevardian is coming. He hates all things Brevard, he wants to destroy all people who live in this area. His goal is to crush and eliminate anyone who identifies as a Brevardian. And when he comes, he will deceive many into joining in on his plan, and we might not recognize at first that he is the Anti-Brevardian. How many of you are now reconsidering if you want to be identified as a Brevardian? Reading this in Greek, as it would have been first read, would have given you the same type of vibe as my Brevardian illustration. So John says, don't be ashamed, don't be deceived, remain a Brevardian even when the Anti-Brevardian comes, even if he starts killing off Brevardians, even if he convinces some Brevardians to drop that identification and thus become Greenville-ians. Remain a Brevardian, stick with it no matter how hard it gets, and you can have confidence when Jesus returns that you will have the best reward in all the world- eternal life in a new Kingdom that will never be threatened by evil people like the Anti-Brevardian, because the Anti-Brevardian and all who are deceived by him and align themselves with him will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. That's what we see in the book of Revelation.

Perhaps this morning you felt a nudge in your heart when we were first reading about loving the world and the things in the world- more than loving God, doing His will, and anticipating His Kingdom. Maybe you are realizing that you aren't loving God that well. And if that's the case, there could be 2 reasons for that. 1.) you're not born again- in other words you haven't yet received the forgiveness of Jesus and surrendered to Him as your King and Lord. If that's you, would you be willing to fix that this morning and even raise your hand right now to say "Hey that's me- I want and need Jesus in my life"? Or, reason 2.) you could be realizing you aren't loving God that well, because you've just grown cold and weak in your relationship with Him. In other words, you recall a time when you surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus in your life, but since then you've slowly drifted further away from Him, and aren't currently living a life that accurately reflects that decision you once made. If that's you, would you be willing to fix that this morning and raise your hand right now to say "Hey that's me- I want and need to make some changes in my life to better show what I believe in my heart"?

Or perhaps all this talk about Jesus coming back and the Anti-Christ makes you pretty nervous, and I would suggest that if that's the case for you, it's possibly due to one of the two same options I just mentioned- 1.) maybe you're not yet on the winning side of King Jesus and need to make that decision today; or 2.) at one time in your life you chose the side of King Jesus, but haven't really yet made it a priority to learn and live out what being on that Kingdom team looks like in this life. And again, my encouragement is for you to change that, starting here, right now, unashamedly make this your day 1 of internalizing and living out this concept of being a child of the King, a citizen of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

I'm going to close us in prayer now, and perhaps as I'm praying you might start to think, "man I should have raised my hand for one of those options, but was a little too nervous to do that." If that thought comes to your head as I'm praying, please take one of the prayer cards you see in front of you, and what I want you to do is to simply describe how you sense God stirring in your heart, and then put some contact info on there so that I can follow up with you and encourage you in your journey with the Lord. You can place that card in the blue box on the wall in the hallway, or the blue box on the wall in the back of this room. Sound like a plan? Ok, let's pray...