

1 John 2:18

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[0:00] Our text for today, 1 John chapter 2 beginning in verse 18. 1 John chapter 2 beginning in verse 18.

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1 John chapter 2 beginning in verse 18. 1 John chapter 2 beginning in verse 18. 1 John chapter 2 beginning in verse 18. of him us god's word maybe seated so yeah we have an interesting assignment this morning as we work our way through the book of first john today handling john's admonitions and warnings regarding many antichrists have come into the world there's some things i need to do to set the table for you to understand this passage and the first one is just to let you know that over time the meaning of anti has changed the prefix has changed its meaning over time now we think of it as something that is opposed i'm anti this or anti that but in this original language as the word anti was used it didn't mean someone who was opposed to christ it meant someone who was attempting to replace christ or put themselves next to christ or add something to christ you might know if you've ever watched any of these uh you know pyramid documentaries or so on and so forth you'll have the chamber and the anti-chamber and that's the classical use of the term and that just means the room next to the room you know it's the the thing next to the thing is the way that anti was used sometimes to refer to replacing but a lot of times just referring to sort of co-locating you know you'd have anti-columns in greek architecture and it would be two columns that are you know kind of next to each other and so forth so this is going to come i'll explain why that's important as we progress through the passage but just so you know the word anti doesn't mean against in the way that john's using it means replacing or beside okay the next thing i want you to know uh regarding the kind of table setting for this passage is that there are only three texts in the whole bible that use the phrase antichrist there are only three texts in the whole bible that use the term antichrist and they are all in first john you do not have the term antichrist in the book of revelation this may surprise some of you you do not have the term antichrist in daniel or in first thessalonians or in matthew 34 this is it these three places are the places where this text appears where this word appears in the text we just read and also in first john 4 i want to read that to you first john chapter 4 verses 1 through 3 beloved do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from god for many false prophets have gone out into the world by this you know the spirit of god every spirit that confesses that jesus christ has come in the flesh is from god and every spirit that does not confess jesus is not from god this is the spirit of the antichrist which you heard was coming and is now in the world already and the third instance where this word appears is in second john john's second letter to the local churches of ephesus in second john verse 7 for many deceivers have gone out 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 so i have a couple things i want you to know the word anti means replacing or next to and there's only three places in the whole bible where this word appears and they're all in uh john's writings and we get from this pretty clear understanding of what john's trying to do and that's the third thing i want you to see before we dive into the text and that is is that all of this language about antichrist is far more concerned about the spirit or the ethos behind this than a particular individual for those of you that maybe don't hear the word ethos that much let me just let you know ethos means a characteristic spirit a moral nature or a set of guiding beliefs that's that's what ethos means and what i want you to see is that when john's talking about antichrist he's not doing this sensationalized um nicholas carpathia kind of nonsense uh he's like seeking out the individual he's actually not really concerned about the individual antichrist which seems to be all

you hear about when this this subject is discussed in most churches he's concerned about the spirit behind that and he's really saying that there are many antichrists not just one what you'll notice in these texts is that he moves from the plural for instance in second john 7 he moves from the plural many deceivers have gone out to a singular such a one is the deceiver in the antichrist this grammatical move is not accidental it's theological he begins by describing the plural phenomenon this plural problem there are many antichrists in the world all tied to a singular spirit and as you dive into the greek it becomes even more evident in these verses that really what john's trying to get us to pay attention to is a vibe is a spirit is an ethos not a particular individual now look at uh i think it's important for a number of reasons but let me just see if i can illustrate this so as many of you know i was in the philippines a couple months ago and i was in the jungle and i was in this beautiful area that had been kind of carved out of the jungle over 40 years and it was just just beautiful this man had done all of this ruling and subduing work in the heart of the jungle it's just so impressive but there were some some issues you know because it is the jungle and one of them is is i like to take walks and they had a mile walking path around this retreat center but the problem is is that if you walk in the middle of the night these giant spiders about this big they build they build webs across the paths and so you just know better than to walk in the middle of the night or you know when you can't see because you're going to get a spider in your face for sure and uh now you know so when i've been there before and so i would warn all my fellow walkers hey just don't go out don't don't walk when you can't see wear a headlamp or something and now there's one spider on the that i've noticed that is all the spiders about this big okay but there was one that was basically like my face like it was it was very large it was it was very large and handsome like my face uh it's a very large and handsome spider anyway uh well think about what would what would be the a bad friend move as if i had these new guys that were with me and i said hey just watch out there's this one spider i call him spike and he's like the size of my face and like just watch out for that spider well the problem with that is is that you know there may or may not be ever an encounter with that one spider and the problem isn't that that one spider the problem is like there's 30 of them they're all a problem they're all scary you're not gonna like any of them touching your face and so on and so forth and so so much of the preaching about antichrist focuses on the individual which i just think is pastoral malpractice uh i think that the the text is actually not saying watch out for this one guy who emerges from this one place at this one time and he's this ethnicity and he's going to have this appeal and so on and so forth the pastoral approach that's happening in this letter is there are spiders all over the place i want to help you to have a general strategy to avoid getting bit in the face by any of them and so that's how we're going to you know go through this text it's it's really more about an ethos than an individual now just as an aside you may say well chris are you saying there is no kind of final boss antichrist and i'm telling you as a reader of church history a couple things one if you would like to say that the beast in revelation or the man of lawlessness is the antichrist or the little horn and daniel you could do that but that is not just a clear simple reading of the text you're doing hermeneutic things you're doing interpretive things to get there you may be right you may not be right but you are engaging in some speculation even to get there secondly you need to understand that plenty of people throughout church

[9:42] history have believed that all of these things are the same guy and that there is this one massive sort of final boss but many people in church history believe that that was something that happened in the first century and there are good textual reasons for believing that that the antichrist appeared in the first century and that was that's a legitimate consistent belief throughout the ages and so even if you were to say yes there is an individual extra big spider a lot of theologians believe that happened in the first century and some believe it will happen in the future my point is is that you could go down all of these lines of speculation if you wanted to but pastorally as i preach the passage i can see what john's doing pretty simple he's not trying to warn you about some figure that either emerged in the past or in the future he's just trying to warn you about a particular spirit a particular set of beliefs that are dangerous to the believer and that he wants to make sure that his people who he loves he calls them his little children are not deceived and so that's what i'm going to do this morning i'm just going to i've got four points and the first three are about kind of the

spiritual ethos behind antichrist the first point is is the the location of the antichrist it's not eastern europe or israel or anything like that it's different uh the second is the the lie of the antichrist what is it that they're saying the antichrist ethos what's what's wrong with it what's it saying it's untrue and then the love of the antichrist ethos location is simply the first point and that is the location is within christendom this ethos this spirit emerges from within the church or at least with from within christian presuppositions we usually think of the antichrist when we get into this final boss kind of thinking is the individual thinking we usually think of him as a predator lurking outside the church but all of the texts that deal with this error this issue really describe antichrist as more of a parasite within the church than a predator on the outside you guys ever watch those uh those simulations on discovery channel where it's like bear versus tiger and things like that and they show these animals like shark versus you know pterodactyl or whatever and uh you know don't take me literally there that's not that's not a real one that was just my weird brain but um uh anyway they have these and they talk about which animal is the most dangerous and so forth and and one of the things that they always do is they talk about well you know over 50 people in the last five years died from grizzly bear attacks or whatever you know and you're like that's that's too many of course but let's compare that to cancer which is something not lurking on the outside of you that could maybe grab you and bite you but something that's lurking on the inside of you that that is far more deadly a lot more people die of cancer of viruses of cells gone wrong of parasites than they do from predators and i think it's very important if i'm going to fulfill john's mission here of warning you and keeping you from being deceived to just help you to understand that when this ethos emerges it's not outside the church coming in it's it's happening from within the particular within the church within christendom you can see that in verse 18 children it is the last hour as you have heard that antichrist is coming so now many antichrists have come therefore we know that it is the last hour they went out from us 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 are not of us really when you scan all of the new testament literature about deception about false prophets and so forth one of the things you've got to say is is that locatively they are far more like parasites than predators they they exist within the church acts 20 verse 30 paul warns uh that that some from

your own number will arise and distort the truth jude which we read as our call to worship there are hidden reefs in your in your church hidden reefs that are uh at your love feasts shepherds feeding themselves the the best passage i know that explains this phenomenon is second peter 2 but false prophets also arose among the people just as there will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies even denying the master who bought them bringing upon themselves swift swift destruction and many will follow their sensuality and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed and in their greed they will exploit you with false words their condemnation from long ago is not idle their destruction is not asleep so and first i first point antichrist location where does this ethos come from it's parasitic it comes from within number two what is the lie that this antichrist ethos is telling well i've already given you that point really when i said that the word anti doesn't mean against it means in replacement of or in addition to so what is the main lie of this antichrist ethos it is simply that jesus plus something else is necessary for salvation that's the antichrist ethos everybody wants to get into incarnation and this and that and we'll we'll get to those texts when we get to them but i'm just telling you that the the name is intentional it tells you all you need to know what what the antichrist spirit is is a diminishment of jesus's sufficiency as savior a a deficient a diminishment of jesus's authority as lord and the addition

of something else that is necessary for a person to obtain eternal life in the early church that came from the jews there were a group of people called the judaizers who went back into the gentile churches in order to get those gentiles to add adherence to the ceremonial law to the gospel in order that they might be saved in the second third and fourth centuries that was the season of dualities a lot of theologies emerged manichaeism and gnosticism and platonism and these are duality philosophies that believe you know uh that that that that that materiality is bad and what what this one would say this this this season of error in the church would have been like um jesus plus secret knowledge is what you need and then in the fourth century islam comes onto the scene chesterton rightly says that islam is a christian heresy it is essentially monotheism without the god man and there they honor christ as a prophet but honor muhammad alongside of him so you can see the anti in the classical appearing in all of these things right so you've got you've got the first wave which is the antichrist which would be the ceremonial law plus jesus and then you've got this second wave through the next three or four centuries and that would be jesus plus uh secret gnostic knowledge and then you've got islam emerging is jesus plus muhammad and the quran and then you right around that same time you begin to see shifts in in the church where you begin to see something like roman catholic theology that we know today and now you've got jesus plus mary plus the mass plus the sacraments and you've got that whole season and then of course in the 16th century you get the reformation faith alone grace alone christ alone his glory alone and something called arminianism emerges which is you need jesus plus your free will to be saved and after that spiritual experience spiritualism which began to be you need jesus plus spiritual experiences and this was the age of seances and many don't realize that this age of spiritualism and seances is actually from whence feminism emerged amongst other things but this is also where you get mormonism and jehovah's witness and toxic charismatic theology it's jesus plus personal experience jesus plus spiritual experience and so really there's an antichrist for every century and sometimes we put them away and sometimes they linger and sometimes they come back and circle back i think you could see a lot of overlaps if we wanted to spend the time talking about it you could see a lot of overlap between mormonism and islam for instance right both have secret books both were uh discovered by dudes alone when they probably shouldn't have been alone uh secret visions second books jesus is less than you've got it so you could just see like this this spirit this ethos it's just going to keep coming i think the thing that you need to really appreciate about what john's doing here is he's saying this is essentially the last legitimate play the enemy has to run they tried to keep jesus from being born that's the old testament all the way through the infanticide of herod they tried to kill him on the cross they've tried to kill all of his believers all of these are relatively ineffective or completely ineffective the one that's really effective is just the parasitic move it's the reason why so many people die of one particular thing the stuff that grows on the inside of you the the viruses that need your biology to live and yet are intent on killing you at the right time after they've manifested the extent the same with cancer cells and so you can see that this is probably the main strategy to take christianity off the rails it's it's essentially like this you can imagine uh just imagine with me a couch uh full of people like you know it's a long couch and a very large man comes in and he just goes right to the middle of the couch kind of wedges himself in plops down well the whole couch is disturbed now no one is comfortable anymore everybody is sort of like accommodating this massive figure in the middle of the couch friends god came to earth took on flesh so that that flesh could be crucified and in that crucifixion make atonement for the sins of those whom he called the massive giant jesus has plopped down on the couch of the world and everybody has to reckon with it everybody has to respond to it it's it's the thing that's changed the world and all we're living in now are just the ripples of opposition from this massive mighty victory that took place 2 000 years ago and so the main strategy seems to essentially be like well we can't do anything about the fact that there's this giant looming figure who has split history in half made his enemies brought his enemies to open shame reconciling all things to himself we can't do anything about the mighty jesus plopping down on the timeline of earth so maybe we could just like say that his mom is also necessary to be saved or maybe we could say like well you know jesus is a good guy but like we've got to have these other things too see you can't do anything about the fact that he's arrived so you've got to figure out a new strategy and that strategy seems to be something like parasitic so that's the location this usually happens within the church the lie jesus plus something and the loves like why are these people doing this well they're just in love with the world there's a reason i won't get into this too much but there's a reason that john moves from the love of the world to the antichrist if you were to just scan all of the false teacher materials

in the new testament you'd see that the motivations are always worldly ambitions there's always some effort to sort of make much of themselves i think it's just it's kind of funny in a way the the antichrist ethos is always something like this jesus isn't enough you need something else and i just so happen to be the guy who has all the something else it's joseph smith it's muhammad it's the pope it's it's always the same deal jesus isn't enough you need something else and by the way i have i have a lot of something else in stock right here it's always to make much of self it's as if you've got these religious people within the local church and they are thinking how can i make this about me and that's really the spirit of the antichrist how can i make this about me how how can i somehow turn the glorious gospel of jesus christ into something that advances my own personal agenda okay so those are the three points location lie love and the the fourth point is like well what do we what do we do about this how do we respond to the spiders everywhere kind of problem which gives us a lot more focus than like and a lot more protection than there's this one thing so how do we respond to this and the fourth point is we respond with loyalty to christ that this is the least sensational sermon on the antichrist you'll ever hear everything i've said is so boring it's the least interesting antichrist sermon you'll ever hear the application point of an antichrist sermon is not to avoid barcodes or uh or ai or to watch out for black helicopters uh or to or to go through the obama letters and make sure you know like it's none of that it's just like stay loyal to christ and you will successfully navigate the problems associated with this intended parasitic deception you know since we're so close to halloween we might as well you know we might as well do the trifecta and invoke a little screw tape letters in this conversation as well one of the things that lewis for those of you that don't know screw tape letters is a book written by c.s lewis where he imagines what it must be like for demons to communicate to each other and form their strategies to keep people deceived that's the book and if you've not read it everybody who reads it is grateful they read it it's it's it's easy recommended easily recommended anyway so so uh with lewis one of the main themes in the screw tape letters is the demons are like we got to keep using the love of novelty and the the interest in fashions not like not like fashions but like changes and impressiveness modernity we've got to keep people kind of titillated for the new thing that's the best way to keep them deceived and i i think that all of that is biographical i think lewis is actually saying uh he's describing why he almost went to hell because as an atheist the final issue that lewis had to deal with was what his friends called chronological snobbery lewis's main reason for not becoming a christian sooner was because he suffered from something his friends called chronological snobbery lewis defines chronological snobbery as this the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited j.i. packer came up with a much better definition later on he said the newer is truer and only what is recent is decent and so one of the reasons that lewis stayed an atheist for as long as he did was he just automatically assumed that the old stuff was less valuable than the new stuff and he had this really illogical which is crazy he's such a brilliant mind he had this illogical blind spot where he assumed that old stuff is less relevant and important and useful than new stuff and that that will get you deceived every time you're essentially wandering around a market full of con artists waiting for someone to sell you the jesus plus something that's why i told you at the beginning of this series that if you really want to understand the key in terms of john's efforts to keep his people safe it just be do not grow bored with that which you had from the beginning if you grow bored with what you had from the beginning if you begin to be a novelty seeker you will meet your con artist and they will sell you a bill of goods that is an antichrist bill of goods it will be jesus plus something else so john's solution to all of this stuff about the antichrist ethos is really his solution in general is he wants people to be loyal he wants people to be loyal to one another and he wants people to be loyal to christ and that's why he uses the language throughout the entire second chapter of you already know what you need to know that's the main theme the main rhetorical theme that carries from the beginning of the chapter to the end you know this stuff guys you don't need any new information you have the information you need in verse 7 he says you already know the commandment in verses 13 through 14 he says you already know god in verse 18 he says you know that the antichrist is coming in verse 19 he says their identity is plain to all in verse 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 verse 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 the father if you want to keep safe from deception don't get bored with that which you had from the beginning when you have spiritual lows when you have questions that aren't answered when you have pains that

don't seem to come with clear explanations just stay loyal to christ we used to teach our kids we used to kind of live in a sketchy neighborhood and we used to teach our kids walk with intention walk like you know where you're going even if you don't know where you're going put the vibes on of someone who is headed somewhere why?

[28:39] because there's a certain kind of person out there who picks up on people who are unfulfilled who are struggling who have a lot of questions who have a lot of hurt and the people who pick up on that there's a lot of them that are bad and they feel your uncertainty they feel your struggle with the same old gospel every week and they can tell this person is ripe to be sold some snake oil so if you want to be free from or safe from deception the main point is is that you understand that people are going to constantly come in with their special stock of the thing you need plus Jesus and you just have to say Joseph Smith no thank you Bill Johnson no thank you Pope Leo no thank you I've got what I need move on the main application of this passage is simply to abide in Christ look at verse 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 and this is the promise that he made to us eternal life you need nothing else to get to heaven you need nothing else to be right with God you need nothing else to endure to the end verse 26

I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you but the anointing you have received from him abides in you and you have no need that anyone should teach you this isn't saying that you have no need for a teacher it's saying you don't need to be out there listening to every Tom, Dick, and Harry that walks in with a new idea but as his anointing teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie just as it is taught you abide in him and now little children abide in him so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him and shame at his coming now somebody should count the words abide real quick I don't know how many there are I didn't count them I can't count really well not in real time anyway what is going on here why is he using this word abide constantly well two things one is that if you're visiting with us today one of the things that's going on in 1 John is he's just doing a commentary on Jesus' farewell discourse so from John the Gospel of John chapter 13 through 17 1 John is just a commentary on this section of scripture in which Jesus

Jesus does a lot of teaching and one of the things that happens in that farewell discourse is Jesus emphasizes abiding so one of the things he's doing is he's just bringing up again another section from the farewell discourse but do you guys know what the word abide means it just means stay put settle in reside all he's saying is don't get flaky on me church Jesus was enough yesterday he's enough tomorrow and I love that Josh read Galatians 1 if anyone comes in with anything new selling you anything new even if it's me or an angel of God let them be accursed for the Gospel that you have received is the good news received once and for all for the saints I think that one of the things I read from Chesterton this week would really help us and it's more broad than this passage but I think this is just really helpful he talks about two visions of progress that are portrayed in the world and I think the worldly vision of progress is something like a road this is how

Chesterton describes it you move down the road and so the further you move down the road the more progress you're making the further away you get from just the basics and you think eventually like well I have to move beyond those things and keep going and keep going and so the worldly view of progress is very linear and it's like all that stuff is in the past but Chesterton portrays the Christian view of progress like a tree growing out and up and beautifying but always rooted in the same truth it started in from the very beginning so I think the world is constantly trying and this will be the screw tape strategy right to get you to think about growth as a moving out of moving beyond and so on and so forth it gets you to almost feel contempt for the former you that thought Jesus was enough it gets you to almost feel contempt for church history because oh my goodness look how sinful those people were and so like as if we're not this other view of progress however the Chestertonian view of progress isn't linear in the same sense it's simply the tree rooted in gospel soil that continues all of its days to continue to continue to continue it's an abiding loyalty to Christ and the growth emerges out of that abiding loyalty not because you needed something new as a teenager

I really did want to follow the Lord and I was just so gullible and vulnerable thankfully the Lord protected me but I really wanted to follow the Lord I just didn't feel like I was growing fast enough and so I started looking at all the other things that are proposed as another option or this was the missing ingredient this is why I haven't grown it's because I haven't had this it's because I haven't had that I started just dabbling and looking at all the possible additions to that would make sense of my Christian life eventually thanks just to the Lord's kindness to me he helped me to realize that all I really needed to do and all I could do is trust Christ every day of my life and that eventually as I just stayed put and stayed loyal to him the grace of God would transform me from one degree of glory to the next so I do have a particular word for some of you who are maybe on the younger side and you're just thinking it's just not working I'm just not growing I just say walk with intention don't look as confused as you are don't open yourself up to all of these snake oil salesmen who will tell you oh but don't you see this is what you've been missing and if you just had this you would be a fulfilled [35:19] Christian nonsense abide in Christ take root in him take root in his gospel and let him grow you according to his faithfulness well as we introduce communion if you're here today and you're a follower of Jesus Christ committed to abiding in him we want you to partake in communion with us even if you're not a member here and the gospel ground that we are taking root in is portrayed at this table this week I've posted an excellent article about just this basic gospel ethos that we see and one of the key passages is 2nd Corinthians 5 20 through 21 this is the gospel ground I want you to abide in therefore we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us we implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God even in the midst of all of the possible antichrists that were rising just very early on in the church you had founding fathers of Christendom in some sense say things like the following from the late 300s

Gregory of Nyssa says for having transferred to himself the filth of my sins he communicated his purity to me making me a partaker of his beauty so would you come and celebrate this very old old faithful true grace that God has given us Jesus Christ became sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God God to God to God to God to him to God to God to God to God