



Beware of False Christs!

A SUMMER SERIES ON THE EPISTLE OF 1 JOHN

Matthew 24:1-14 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 1 John 2:18-21

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Today we heard Jesus warn us about false teachers when He said, *“Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many ... many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.”* ^{Matthew 24:4,5,11} The Apostle John echoes that when he writes, *“... it is the last hour, and as you have heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know it's the last hour.”* ^{1 John 2:18}

We are living in the **End Times**, or as John called them, **the Last Days**¹. These are the days of **the New Testament era**; from the Ascension of Jesus through His return in full glory and power on the Last Day. We are living our lives in the Last Days; and Scripture warns us that things will continually get worse and worse until the End. We certainly see that in our lifetime; the rebellion and immorality in the world is **appalling**, **atrocious**, and growing at an **alarming** rate!

One of the **signs of the end** are false teachers **inside** the Holy Christian Church. That's what Jesus and John were warning us about. **Watch out that no one deceives you**, Jesus said. False teachers twist, warp, or deny Scripture and its authority; they corrupt the teachings of the New Testament. They minimize Christ and His work on the cross in order to promote their own good works and effort².

¹ An easy way to understand the “Last Days” or “End times” is by the words of the angel at the Ascension of Jesus in Acts 1:11, he said: “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” The time in-between Christ’s Ascension and Return on the Last Day is known as the “Last Days”, or sometimes called the “End Times”, or the “New Testament era.”

² The attempt to get rid of the Word of the Apostles and the central teaching of Christianity, the doctrine of salvation by grace, has been and still is the sole cause of the division in the Christian Church. [Christian Dogmatics](#).

Francis Pieper, Vol 1, p.23

Jesus describes false teaching as **yeast that grows and spreads** Matt 16:11ff ; St. Paul describes it as **gangrene** 2 Timothy 2:16ff , which not only grows and spreads but also kills. 26 of the 27 New Testament books³ warn us about false teachers and their false doctrines. The warnings are **everywhere** in Scripture; **THE DANGER IS GREAT!** Not everything “*inside*” the Holy Christian Church is *holy*, nor *Christian*. There is a multitude of false teachers claiming to be teachers of the truth!

St. John describes false teachers with a harsh term: he first calls them “**antichrists**”⁴. An antichrist is someone who is trying to ‘replace’ Christ; it does not just mean *against Christ*⁵. False teachers replace Christ and His Word with their own false dreams, ideas, and lies. The Apostle John adds that there is a satanic aspect to **antichrists** -- they lie, deceive and are *children of the devil*.

There are many “false ideas” about Christ being taught today. For instance:

⇒ Some teach that Jesus just wants you to *be happy and do good*. Feel good about yourself, accept yourself, forgive yourself, and be helpful. That is how the “Gospel” is taught in many churches

³ The book of Philemon is the lone exception. In this 25 verse “book”, Paul writes a personal letter to a man named Philemon on behalf of a runaway slave name Onesimus. No warning of false teachers is included.

⁴ John would have his readers to distinguish between “antichrists” and “the Antichrist.” “Lectures on the Three Letters of John” by Dr. George Stoeckhardt, p.30 Protestants have historically identified the Antichrist as the OFFICE of papacy, not a specific pope. There are study notes on the doctrine of the Antichrist on Trinity’s website TrinityLCS.org; go to the “info center” tab across the top, find the study notes for 1,2,3 John, and look for the file “2C antichrist 8 page summary.” Or email me, I will send them to you!

⁵ To understand the author’s use of the term Antichrist we must note that this is more than just someone who opposes Christ, but one who seeks to replace Christ, that is, a counterfeit Christ. This is precisely the idea in Mark 13:22 where Jesus warns His followers about “false Christs and false prophets” who will arise before His return, working signs and wonders in order to deceive (see 2:26), if possible, the elect. [1, 2, 3 John Comfort And Counsel](#)

[For A Church In Crisis](#), Dr. W. Hall Harris III, Bible.org This understanding is inherent in the definition of the Greek word ἀντί.

- ⇒ Others teach that your *feelings and emotions* for Jesus is the Christian faith; that you “love Jesus” when you sway to the music and have a tear in your eye. Sunday worship becomes a pep rally to build your emotions. If you don’t have the feelings nor the emotions, then there is something wrong with your faith.
- ⇒ Many teach that Jesus *loves you just as you are ... “unconditionally”*. By this they mean that He overlooks your sin, rebellion, and immorality, and He would never call you to repent. This is a Jesus created in man’s own sinful image . . . a Jesus who lets you do whatever you want.

False teachers turn Jesus into anything and anyone they think will draw a crowd. Jesus calls this **yeast**; Paul calls it **gangrene**, John calls it **antichrist**. The true Christ is being replaced by false ideas about Christ.

Of course, **the True Christ** is the *incarnate* Son of God who came into this world to take your sin to the cross. Jesus suffers and dies in your place and for your sin. Three days later, He rose from the dead proving that He really is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. *This is the true Christ*. This is Who He is and what He has done for you! In Him, you have the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and eternal life. The true Lord Jesus Christ rescues you from sin ... He doesn’t encourage, support, and overlook your sin! The true Lord Jesus Christ declares you righteous, and sets you apart to live a holy life. The unconditional love of God is not that He overlooks your immorality and rebellion and “accepts you as you are” -- rather the *unconditional love of God* is that Christ died for the sins of everyone; *that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*. **This is the unconditional love of God!** *This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins*. The true Jesus has saved you from your sin by His death on the cross; and He calls you to repent of all sin and trust in His forgiveness! He doesn’t encourage, support, and overlook your sin!

You could say that the most important theme in the book of first John is that you believe in the **correct Christ**; John writes the epistle of First John so that you put your faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. The crucified man who has risen from the dead is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. This is the **core message** of the book of First John.

Make sure that you have your faith in the True Christ revealed in Holy Scripture; have nothing to do with the false ideas about Christ that are so common. They are **yeast**, those ideas will grow and spread. They are **gangrene**, those ideas will kill your faith. They are **antichrists**; those ideas replace the true Christ.

The Apostle John teaches us the importance of staying in fellowship with Christ and the Apostles. Fellowship with Christ and the Apostles means that you hold to the teachings of the **New Testament**; that your faith and conviction is based on the words of Christ and His Apostles and not on the false teachers or the ways of the world. This is how you learn to recognize the false Christs and avoid them.

Once again, we are back to the importance of being **Biblically Literate and Doctrinally Sound**. The only way to be biblically literate and doctrinally sound is by regular and serious study of the Word of God. You learn the truths of the New Testament; you learn the doctrines of Scripture; you know the stories of the Bible. The study of Holy Scripture is a lifelong venture; it is a sign of discipleship; this is how you abide in Christ, and it is how you recognize the false ideas about Christ. Put the word of God into your everyday life; continually learn it and study it!

By the grace of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the Word of God, we know, believe, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ; the crucified man who has risen from the dead is the Son of God and the Savior of the world! Amen!

Holy Spirit, we ask that you deepen our faith and conviction in the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to maintain our focus on His perfect life and His sacrificial death on the cross for us and our salvation. Protect us from false teachers and their poisonous ideas. grant us zeal and passion to be biblically literate and doctrinally sound disciples. We ask this in Jesus' name and to the glory of the Father, Amen!

Matthew 24:1-14

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. 2 “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.” 3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” 4 Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. 6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains. 9 “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13 but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

1 John 2:18-21

Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. 21 I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. 5 Don't you remember that

when I was with you I used to tell you these things? 6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, 10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. 13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. 16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.