

The DOCTRINE of Antichrist

Toward the end of the first century, a growing heresy began taking form, seriously impacting the Church of God. The Apostle John warned those who were faithful, of its danger. Few heeded, and the Church gradually accepted a theological position that disregarded one of the essential Truths of all time.

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A narrow segment of Scripture, written in the later years of the first century, warns of a developing and serious danger that was then beginning to make inroads into the Church. This theological error was, even in those early years, causing many to embrace concepts that would eventually overthrow the most fundamental premise in the Church. Its impact remains a present danger even today, because, this error was embraced, more than it was rejected. But, unfortunately, very few people are remotely aware of this sinister element, and as a result, aren't aware that they should be looking out for it or even what it is they should be looking for.

But what John warned about never really went away. Rather, it grew, gradually affecting nearly every theological discipline in main stream religion. By the time the apostasy of the early second century was fully established, this error had become accepted doctrine in what was then being called "Christianity". It was this very error that helped shape many of the theological positions we all recognize today.

The Antichrist?

Especially in Fundamentalist circles, most are familiar with a **person** referred to as "the Antichrist". Most remain blissfully unaware that this term, applied to an individual person, to come to power at the end time, is a Biblical misnomer. Those who relate or expound upon Bible prophecy often refer to "the Antichrist". It could be argued that this is a legitimate use of that name, based on the explicit passage found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12. This is that "son of perdition", a wicked God-position usurper, who Christ will destroy with the brightness of His coming. While people usually focus on that **person** called the antichrist, they

should be looking for what John warned about: the **doctrine** of antichrist.

The term "Antichrist" is used only six times in the Bible. All six are by the same author, the Apostle John, found just in his later writings, written in a narrow time-frame, in his books of 1st and 2nd John.

In his first use of the term, he refers to there being 'many antichrists',¹ referring to people, but not their being THE antichrist, rather referring to their being proponents of that **doctrine** being called the "doctrine of antichrist". While most strain for clues as to the identity of that wicked individual to emerge at the end time, who is referred to by them as "the antichrist", they overlook the fact that John was not so much warning of a specific individual, but rather, was warning of a particularly sinister doctrinal premise that was beginning to contaminate the Church even in his day: a doctrinal premise that would help provide a field for tares, and the platform upon which this final end-time figure will rise. That doctrine has largely escaped attention!

What Is That Doctrine?

To better assess what John was warning against, we should review each of the places where he uses this unique term, and gain from them what it is that he is referring to. We needn't just guess.

We've already considered the first place, found in 1 John 2:18, where he tells us, "*Little children, it is the last time; and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*" He goes on to relate the growing disaffection among many

¹ 1 John 2:18

against the Truth in the next three verses, then he explains, *“Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denies the Father and the Son.”* Here we begin to find the first definition as to the specific doctrine being referred to. He is a LIAR who denies that Jesus is the Christ, **but** he is an antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. More is said about this “Father and Son” consideration in the following passages. *“Whosoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: ... Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.”* (verses 23 & 24). It is this essential “Father/Son” doctrine, that some were challenging.

The Father and the Son?

We can begin to see from this that this ‘doctrine of antichrist’ involves a denial of “the Father and the Son”. Deny, how? What denomination does that?

Those who deny that Christ is God’s Anointed, (that one sent the other), are declared liars, but there is a more insidious concept, one that actually denies the relationship between the two, that one actually was the progeny of the other. It is this development that he refers to as being the doctrine of antichrist. In this, there is something so dangerous, he refers to it as **Anti-Christ!** Actually being against who and what Christ IS! But this isn’t all.

His next reference to it, in 1 John 4:1-3 provides us more specific definition. *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”* This introduction is interesting, in that it refers to false prophets having gone out into the world, presumably having gone from within, rather than just stating the obvious, that the world is full of false prophets, which it is.

He continues, *“Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world.”*

We need to consider what this passage is saying. “Denying that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”? Who does that? How does one do that?

We need to remember that those to whom John was writing actually were personal eyewitnesses of Christ’s having been a physical being. They knew Him personally, some of them. They spent time with and touched Him.² So, what were these ‘anti-christ’ types alleging? That He was not actually a physical person? No, it was something more.

In his final mention, John presents the matter once again. 2 John 7 says, *“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”* This wouldn’t even have been an issue if it were merely a matter of Jesus having been physical. The problem area with many people was and is the fact that He also had a Spirit pre-existence, He became flesh, and for a time was manifest IN the flesh!

Of Flesh, or Of Spirit?

As that first generation in the Church began to die out, and as theological and philosophical concepts from the world at large began to gain much wider audience, the matter of Christ’s person and His existence began to be debated. It revolved around the fundamental question: If Christ was God, how could He be flesh, or, if He was flesh, how could He be God? Some felt that in order to substantiate His Divinity, He could not truly have been of the human kind. Allegedly, flesh could not be Divine!

But, isn’t affirming Christ’s Divinity a commendable thing?

Not if it excludes the essential Biblical Truth that He was, for a time, composed of and sustained in life by the flesh! *“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)...”* (John 1:14) A further point of interest is found in the next verse, *“John (the Baptist) bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, ‘This was He of whom I spake, He that comes after me is preferred before me: **for He was before me.**’”*

² 1 John 1:1 ...we have seen...and our hands have handled...

Now, there are a number of things to notice about what is stated here. First, the Word **was made** flesh, suggesting that He was made so by someone other than Himself. Second, the process by which He was made flesh was a by a begetting of a Being since referred to as “the Father”! And third, John the Baptist alleges that this begotten Being pre-existed **before he did!** (Now, remember, John was pointedly mentioned as having been conceived six months before Jesus was!)³ The issue, then, is not only Jesus Christ’s origin as a physical Being, but the fact that He **existed prior to** His human conception, even prior to John’s conception! In the theological position of some, this is a problem. A problem that has ancient roots!

The “Father and Son” interrelationship between these two pre-existing Beings originated with this unprecedented begetting in the winter of 6 BC. (Herod died in the spring of 4 BC, a half-year after Christ was born).⁴

But, was the newly begotten “Son” Divine? Did He abandon His Divinity in order to become a “Son of Man”, born of the human kind? Can a God Being exist other than of Spirit? This is what people struggle with conceptually, and the reason they do so accounts largely to the preconceived dictates of that theological discipline forming even in John’s day. The fundamental premise was that God could not exist other than of Spirit, that He could not exist IN the physical dimension and still be Divine. A further progression along that line of reasoning concluded that God could not die. Yet, the fundamental assertion in Scripture is that He, in fact, did become flesh, and DID die!⁵ Granted, under the taint of centuries-old mis-conception, this is not easy for some of us to fully fathom.

The Trinitarian Obfuscation.

By the early fourth century, at a council called to deal with this question, two distinct branches of thinking had begun to solidify. One was what we now know as ‘trinitarianism’ the other ‘Arianism’.

³ Luke 1:31 - 36

⁴ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 17, Chapter 6, paragraph 4 identifies a lunar eclipse near the time of Herod’s death that could only have been in the Spring of 4 BC.

⁵ Hebrews 2:9 & 14 Jesus became flesh and blood...that He might taste death for every man!

This was the Council of Nicea, in 325 AD, presided over by the Roman Emperor Constantine

The Trinitarian concept, as it’s known today, encompasses many variations. However, those who hold to pure Trinitarian thought require that Jesus Christ was not a physical God Being. Complicating the picture is the monotheistic belief, that God is but one single Being. Their “three Person” Godhead could not intermingle a physical Being together with two Spirit Beings. A Divine Being, in order to be one of three ‘essential’ co-equals, could not be physical. A ‘hypostasis’⁶ can not be physical, especially when its two ‘equal’ counterparts are not and never were physical!

So we can see in the Trinitarian discipline some of what this ‘spirit of antichrist’ developed into in later years. Trinitarianism, in its most basic form, disallows a physical Being as its ‘second person’.

Concurrently in the early fourth century, the Arian position, which didn’t accept that God’s Spirit was a ‘third person’, dealt with the Divinity question differently. However, on one basic question, it missed the mark also. The Arian position holds that Jesus Christ was a Being first **created** at and by His conception in the flesh. As to His physical existence and Divinity at and after conception, they posed the more correct answer.

The problem remained, however, to correctly explain His True nature and purpose. Could a Divine Being be composed of flesh? The Arian conclusion also was, **no!** So to allow His physical existence as being essential, they disallowed His prior existence as a Spirit Being: A God with God!⁷

Perhaps we shouldn’t be trying to comprehend or define the “Nature of God” by the theological limitations of ‘monotheism’ or of ‘trinitarianism’. Because, you see, neither discipline allows the basic Biblical Truth! Rather, we should conceive of this subject by the Biblical definition of the “Father and the Son”! (That’s the term John used.)

⁶ See commentaries on Hebrews 1:3. Trinitarianism poses that God is a single Being, who manifests Himself in any of three ‘hypostases’. Thus accommodating the dictates of monotheism, while tacitly acknowledging the obvious and necessary separate ‘persons’ of the Biblical narrative!

⁷ John 1:1 “..the Word was with God, the Word was God.”

One God Being changed the spirit essence of the other God Being into pre-coded genetic material capable of producing a physical reproduction of what that other God-Being had been.⁸ The Being who performed this act became a ‘father’, as we’d define it! The essential element in the “Father and Son” doctrine is that for a time, one Being became flesh, while the other remained Spirit.⁹ A Spirit Being **can not shed blood and die**, and thus could not fulfill the death requirement imposed by sin. A Spirit Being could not be our substitutionary Sacrifice! Thus, a denial that Jesus Christ was flesh effectively negates His being our Savior!! Do you see the problem? The Apostle John did!

The Trinitarian (triune-monotheistic) concept remains error, so long as it disallows Christ actually being a physical being! (What John called the doctrine of ‘Antichrist’.) Yet, if it allows Him to have been flesh, it contradicts monotheism’s fundamental and defining premise! A physical being can not be a ‘hypostasis’. Such admission would disallow the Trinitarian doctrine from conforming to basic monotheistic definition!

The Arian (biune-monotheistic) concept remains in error so long as it disallows Christ’s pre-existence¹⁰ as a Spirit Being prior to His incarnation! A pre-existence is essential to His Eternal Divinity!¹¹

Under either persuasion, the existence of God in the flesh requires there be another God Being, as a lone physical being could not sustain the universe, or consciously self-resurrect, **if dead!**¹²

The entire structure of fundamental Christian Doctrine demands there be more than One single Being in the Godhead. As Christian theology of the second century, and later, took on a ‘refined philosophical sophistication’, this fundamental element John refers to was debated heavily, and gradually re-conceived, becoming the very thing John warned about! No surprise, because it is clearly demonstrated in Jewish theology, that they

⁸ Hebrews 1:5 “..this day have I begotten you..”

⁹ 1 Timothy 3:16 “...God manifest in the flesh...”

¹⁰ 1 John 1:2 “...the life that was with the Father...”

¹¹ John 17:5 “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was.”

¹² 1 Peter 3:18 “...being put to death in the flesh...”

also rejected, very pointedly, the same truth. See my articles on “The 134 Emendations”, “Who is the Ancient of Days?” and “The Hypostasis Hoax” for further explanation on the pre-Christian reaction to this same basic premise, revealed in the pages of Old Testament, Psalm 110 particularly, and as quoted so specifically by Christ and His Apostles in at least twenty places in the New Testament.¹³

We should keep in mind that Jesus was condemned to death for affirming that there are two Beings in the Godhead,¹⁴ and not only that there were two, but that He was that other One, soon to be “*seated at the right hand of God*” in Heaven! The High Priest felt compelled to tear his clothes¹⁵ upon hearing Christ’s calculated response to the pointed question, “*I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God*”¹⁶ After hearing Christ’s answer, the High Priest slandered the Truth, calling it **Blasphemy!!**

These same people reacted very badly to the same assertion by Stephen of there being two Beings in the Godhead, with one then at the right hand of the other. Being the ‘strict monotheists’ that they were, they reacted in typical fashion. Presumably, they didn’t actually bite Stephen, this being just figurative language. But his comment obviously drew their uninhibited fury. (Acts 7:54 – 60)

In his day, the Apostle John saw the beginnings of the calculated and subliminal theological assault against this essential Truth, of the “Father and the Son”. Two Beings in the Godhead, identical in two respects, yet distinct in two respects, as Paul explains in Hebrews 1:3, and with one ultimately “seated at the right hand” of the other! (Read the entire passage in Hebrews 1: verses 2 thru 13: (a series of quotes from the Old Testament!)) The Son was the Creator (v.2 & 10), the Son became the begotten of the Father, (v.5 & 6), ultimately was elevated to God’s Heavenly Throne (v.8 & 13).

John was Jesus’ closest personal friend! We need to heed his warning and remain alert to the ongoing danger: the spirit and doctrine of Antichrist. **Ω**

¹³ The article “Hypostasis Hoax” lists all twenty places.

¹⁴ Matthew 26:64 “..sitting on the right hand of power..”

¹⁵ Matthew 26:65 “Then the High Priest rent his clothes..”

¹⁶ Matthew 26:63