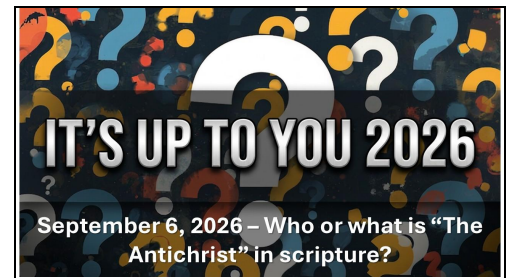


It's Up to You 2026 (Week 7) - It's Up to You 2026 (Week 7) - Who or what is "The Antichrist" in scripture??



Yesterday's Sermon Summary

1. The final question of our summer Q&A series was, "Who or what is 'Antichrist' in the Bible?" We responded to this in three parts - part one was titled, "The long, winding, confusing, convoluted, contextualized, paranoid story of 'antichrist' in church history."
2. "Antichrist" has sparked speculation and accusation across church history...Not just "Who is the Antichrist and when will he/it arrive?" but also "____ (fill in the blank) ____ is the Antichrist and is here now!!" Jaroslav Pelikan, a church historian who taught at Yale for years, wrote about this dynamic, "Every century has had its own candidate for the Antichrist, and almost every major political or religious conflict in Christian history has been interpreted by someone as the final battle between the forces of God and the forces of evil. The tendency to treat apocalyptic prophecy as a secret code that happens to unlock the headline news of one's own immediate era is one of the most persistent—and most discredited—habits in the history of biblical interpretation." (We gave a bunch of examples in the sermon itself.)
3. Also, within American church history over the last 120 years there has been a misguided compression or conflation of three New Testament figures into one popularized apocalyptic entity called "The Antichrist": a) "The man of lawlessness" (2nd Thes. 2), b) "The beast" (Revelation 13), and "Antichrist" (1st and 2nd John). These three terms were created by two distinct Christian communities and/or authors (Paul and John), the first was separated from the other two by 30-40 years. Thus, these terms must be taken independently of one another, and allowed to speak for themselves.
4. In part two, we examined the three (only three) New Testament passages that mention "antichrist" - 1st John 2.18-26, 4.1-5, and 2 John 7-9. Across those three passages, we discovered that those labeled "antichrist" were a) already active in the ancient world, and others like them would continue to emerge, b) from within the church and had left it, and c) equated with "liars," "deceivers," and "false prophets."
5. We also observed that d) their message went beyond the teaching of Christ and was appealing to the world at large, and e) the very term "antichrist" means to be "against" Christ or to be "a substitute for" or to "take the place of" Christ.
6. So all that leads us to conclude that "antichrist" is anyone or anything that a) decentralizes Christ in favor of another allegiance, b) weakens Christ's teaching in order to make it more palatable to and less challenging to with the world and its prevailing point of view, and c) lies and deceives about ultimate things – about God; about Christ, what He stood for and what He really cares about; about Christian truth, including moral and ethical truth; about what really matters in this life and the next, etc.
7. So "antichrist" isn't a title or a name, but more like a descriptive adjective. It's a pattern that repeats: it appeared in the past, it will continue to appear in the future, and, yes, it is likely among us in the present. "Antichrists" are those people, groups, leaders, and influences that ask us to exchange the self-giving, sacrificial, boundary-crossing, benevolent Christ for any other counterfeit "Lord." As Dietrich Bonhoeffer

wrote, "The figure of the antichrist arises where the world, pretending to be a savior, is given the right to shape and dominate the human soul, putting itself in the place of God."

8. In part three, we remembered that the point of these passages is less about identifying who or what "antichrist" is but instead to make Christian people immune to "antichrist."

9. The key piece to that "immunity plan" is to "remain/abide" with Christ. That term is used 26 times in the New Testament, 18 of which occur in 1st and 2nd John - so "abiding" is central to its message. To "remain/abide" is to dwell with, stay with, or build a home with Christ. Richard Foster, the great writer on spiritual formation, compares it to soaking or marinating - we need to have practices and routines in our lives that permeate us with Christ, His presence, His perspective, and His teaching.

10. Doing this will keep Christ and His teaching unrivaled in our lives: as biblical scholar N. T. Wright writes, "Jesus is not an additive to life, an extra feature on an already crowded canvas. He is the central figure, the focal point, the light in which everything else is seen." And we use Christ and His teaching to "test," or "examine carefully and assess" (1st John 4.1), everything we're hearing, all the voices that seek to influence us, the vexing questions of the world, etc.

A Prayer for the Week (Drawn from 1st John 2.18-26, 4.1-5, and 2nd John 7-9)

Lord God, we live in a world filled with many voices. Let me ground myself in the truth of Christ that has been mine from the beginning. May I choose to abide in Christ, and to let His message live deeply within me. If I will listen to the Holy Spirit, I won't be easily shaken or led astray. I will take the time to examine and assess every message that seeks my attention and heart against what I see and hear in Jesus Christ. In knowing Christ, I will come to know life at its fullest, life that has no end, amen.

Exploring More this Week

1. Spend some time in those three passages that describe "antichrist": [1st John 2.18-27, 4.1-5](#), and [2nd John 7-9](#). And as you do, consider these questions:

- How is "antichrist" described?
- Who/what historically or at present or in your own personal experience has been like "antichrist"?
- UCC pastor Talitha Arnold writes, "Rather than looking for Antichrist out there or in others, what if we had the courage to see it in ourselves?" So perhaps it would be worth reflecting on when and how that's been true for you.
- In these passages, what are the key pieces of an "antichrist immunity plan"?
- How do you currently "remain or abide" in Christ? What could you add to your day and week that would help you do this more?

2. These articles will give you an overview of those two terms in the New Testament that are often wrongly linked to "antichrist":

- [Commentary on 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)
- [The Sign of the Beast - Bible Odyssey](#)