

# The Spirit of Antichrist

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Brethren, as I'm sure most all of you are aware, the Apostle John authored multiple books that we have today in our New Testament. He authored one of the four gospel accounts of Christ's ministry. He authored the book of Revelation. But in addition to those two, he also authored several epistles or letters that he wrote to the Church of God in his time. In those three letters that he wrote, one of the major focuses is John trying to address a heresy that he refers to as the "spirit of antichrist". What we're going to do today in the sermon is take a closer look at what he was referring to there, to understand how to correctly use this particular term. And also, the context of what he was addressing at that time, and what we can learn about this that is relevant to our time today. So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

## The Spirit of Antichrist

Now, you've probably heard the term "antichrist" used. That's probably a term you've heard many times and are familiar with. But you've probably oftentimes heard it used as if it's a title for a specific individual at the end time. Because you oftentimes hear people refer to "the Antichrist". Or who do you think "the Antichrist" is going to be? Or what "the Antichrist" is going to do. One of the things we're going to see today is if we pay attention to the context of how this term is used and even dig a little deeper into what the Greek manuscripts show us about how this term is used it's actually not a term used as a title for a specific individual. It's really referring to a heretical belief and those who are pushing that belief that John was addressing in his time.

If you do a search on the term "antichrist", what you're going to see is it only comes up five times in the Bible. And every time it's used, it's either in 1 John or 2 John. So, to take a look at this, turn over to 1 John 4. The first thing we're going to do is look at every scripture where this particular term is used. Again, particularly pay attention to the context of how it's used, because one of the things we're going to see here is it's not a title for a specific individual. Now, it does have a connection with the end time, and we'll explore that later in this sermon. But notice first of all what it says about it. And notice the fact that it's not referring to a title for a single individual. To start off with, let's start reading in 1 John 4:1.

**1 John 4:1** *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."*  
(NKJV)

He's dealing with false teachers, and the false doctrines that they teach. That is what he's addressing here.

*"2) By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3) and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God...." (NKJV)*

Now, again, notice the emphasis on whether or not Christ has come in the flesh because we're going to see this is very much tied to what he means by the "spirit of antichrist". Now, continuing in verse 3.

*"...And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." (NKJV)*

Now, I just read this from the New King James translation. The reason I point that out is in the New King James, it does treat this like it is a title because it inserts the word "the", which if you look in an interlinear, you'll see that there's not a Greek word there that correlates with the word "the". That's really just inserted by the translators. It also capitalizes the word "antichrist" as if it's a title for a specific individual. Notice how he's also saying, *"is now already in the world"*. So, he's also referring to a problem in his time. Because oftentimes when you hear "the antichrist", it's always being applied to a specific individual at the end time, and obviously that's not what he's saying here.

Now, let me also point out how verse 3 is translated in the regular King James because you'll notice here it doesn't insert the word "the", and it doesn't capitalize "antichrist" because it acknowledges we're not talking about a title for a specific individual. He's addressing a false teaching and those who promote this false teaching. Again, this is verse 3 out of the King James version.

**1 John 4:3** *"And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." (KJV)*

Notice, again, he's addressing a situation that's current in his time. He's not just looking at the end time. There is one reference we'll see here where he connects this "spirit of antichrist" with the end time, and we'll explore why that is a little later. Notice here, he's addressing something relevant and current at the time he's writing this, and it's the "spirit of antichrist". It's not "the Antichrist". It's not a title. But it is very much tied to the idea of teaching that Christ didn't actually come in the flesh. Notice as we look at all the references, that gets emphasized a lot. It's very much tied to the heresy that Christ wasn't a flesh and blood human being during His earthly ministry. Now, to see this emphasized again, turn over to 2 John. We'll see here again how he emphasizes how this is tied to this idea that Christ wasn't really a flesh and blood human. It's 2 John in verse 7.

**2 John 7** *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." (NKJV)*

Notice, it's not "the Antichrist". It's not an individual. It's a false teaching. It's deception, and it's a false teaching related to denying that Christ was a flesh and blood human being during His earthly ministry. Now, continue in verse 8.

*"8) Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. 9) Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 10) If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11) for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds." (NKJV)*

We'll see here in a moment there was a heretical movement that was occurring in John's time that was a significant problem in the Church of God. That's why he's taking the hardline stance that he has to have nothing to do with this. But notice again, we're not talking about a specific individual. We're referring to a heresy that was spreading, and it is tied to, again, denying that Christ came in the flesh.

Now, to notice the other references for this turnover to 1 John 2, and we'll start in verse 18. And again, we'll notice here where it does connect this with the end time. We'll dig a little deeper here and notice he's not just identifying a specific individual. Again, we're addressing a heresy is what he's addressing. It's 1 John 2:18.

**1 John 2:18** *"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour." (NKJV)*

Again, his comment about the "last hour" here is obviously referring to the end time. Later in this sermon, we'll address why he's connecting those two. As I mentioned before, I'm reading from the New King James translation, and this is another verse where the New King James inserts the word "the". But in this particular verse there's a little "1" next to it in my New King James, and in the margin, it points out that "the" is not actually in the original. The Greek manuscripts don't have "the" there. It also capitalizes "antichrist" as if we're talking about a title, but again, notice he talks about "many". So, again, he's not addressing a specific individual. But just to show you this particular verse from the regular King James translation. It translates it as:

**1 John 2:18** *"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." (KJV)*

Notice he says there are "many", and it's also happening at the time that he's writing this. So, you can see he's not referring to a unique title that identifies just one specific individual in the end time. Now, we'll come back later to connect why he connects this particular heresy with the end time because there is a good reason for that. Just to continue on now, in verse 19.

**1 John 2:19** *"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 they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us."* (NKJV)

Notice how he keeps referring to "they and them". It's plural. Again, it's not a title for a specific individual.

*"20) But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.  
21) I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. 22) Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.  
23) Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also."* (NKJV)

Notice once again, we've tied this false teaching with denying that Christ came in the flesh and that He is who He says He was. To understand what that's about, we need to understand the heretical movement that was going on at the time that John was writing this. It was a heretical movement called Gnosticism. As we're going to see here in a minute, as we understand more of what Gnosticism is about, and then read the first chapter of 1 John, we can see it's very obvious he was specifically dealing with the problem of Gnosticism affecting the 1st century Church. That's what he is addressing.

Now, Gnosticism is a very ethereal philosophy, and we're certainly not going to cover all the details of it. But I'm going to read to you some excerpts from a couple of articles that address Gnosticism, just to give you a general overview of the relevant concepts here that John is specifically addressing. As we read through this, pay particular attention to how it connects with denying that Christ came in the flesh, and also how it really affects the issue of obedience to God because we're going to see here that Gnostics believed that you connected with God through this ethereal knowledge that you had. A lot of them believed that you really didn't have to change your behavior because of how they applied this belief, but that'll make a little more sense here as we go through some articles that are going to explain it.

Now, the first quote I'd like to read to you here is from a website that's called insight.org. It's an article titled Mind Over Matter: The Heresy of Gnosticism both Then and Now. I'm not going to read to you the entire article, but just some excerpts from it. Quoting from the article it says:

*"The Gnostics...were some of the earliest heretics to infiltrate the church with their poisonous doctrines, arising shortly after the gospel began penetrating the Roman world near the Mediterranean Sea in the first century. The word Gnosticism comes from the Greek word gnosis, meaning "knowledge." The Gnostics believed there was a mysterious or secret knowledge reserved for those with true understanding, leading to the salvation of the soul. Spiritual salvation was of preeminence to the Gnostics because they thought the human spirit was naturally good and was entrapped or imprisoned in the body, which*

*was naturally evil or merely an illusion. Their goal, therefore, was to free the spirit from its embodied prison, and the only key to unlock the prison doors was the mysterious knowledge they possessed.*

*This radical distinction between our bodies and our spirits led Gnostics to twist the early church's understanding of who Jesus was and is. The Gnostics saw Jesus as a messenger bringing the special knowledge of salvation to humanity's imprisoned soul. They believed that when Jesus came to earth He didn't possess a body like our own; instead, the Gnostics taught that He only seemed to have a physical body (known as the heresy of "docetism," from the Greek verb "to seem")....*

*The implications of these Gnostic beliefs had profound effects on the church. Not only did the Gnostics successfully deceive some people in the church into becoming Gnostic themselves, but their misleading ideas about how Christians should live crept into some church teaching. In practice, some Christians came to the false conclusion that they must literally beat their bodies into submission and live such ascetic lives that they never allowed themselves the enjoyment of bodily pleasures. Others went to the opposite extreme and permitted their physical passions to run whatever course they chose. Those in this second group justified their libertine lifestyles with the erroneous notion that their evil bodies were destined for destruction anyway, while their spirits, which they believed were good, would remain unharmed."*

So, you can see here many of them not only twisted the view of who Christ was and denied that He actually came in the flesh as a physical human being, and died for the sins of mankind, the way the Bible teaches it. They also had a twisted view that this secret knowledge that they felt they had, that gained you salvation and you could really just indulge all your passions and lusts however you wanted to because the body was evil anyway. Again, that's going to become important as we read through the first part of the book of 1 John, because once you understand Gnosticism, and then read that first chapter of 1 John, you'll see very clearly it's obvious what he was addressing was the problem of Gnosticism in his time.

Now, to quote from another article, just to expound on this a little more. This is an article I pulled off of Christianity.com. The title of the article is Gnosticism: Origin, Meaning and Relation to Christianity. Again, I'm not going to read the entire article, just some excerpts from it. Quoting from the article:

***"What Were Some Implications of Gnosticism?"***

*Since Gnostics considered matter itself corrupt, they also considered the body corrupt. The trend of some Gnostics was to teach that there is no harm in indulging fleshly desires since the body is utterly corrupt and beyond redemption anyhow. Other Gnostics, perhaps the majority, held that the body must be kept in*

*check by strict asceticism. Whether one chooses plan A or plan B, the underlying doctrine makes it impossible to understand how God could become a true man with a fleshly body in Christ Jesus.*

*If all matter is corrupt, Christ's body also was corrupt. Since the "Christian" Gnostics accepted Christ as, in some sense, the savior, they were prone to a heresy called docetism, which taught that Christ only appeared to have a man's body. Those Gnostics who avoided docetism and allowed Christ a real material body taught that the Christ spirit entered into Jesus' body at some point and was later withdrawn. Even on this point, Gnostic writings differ. Some say that the Christ spirit abandoned the man Jesus and left him to die alone on the cross, while others that someone other than Jesus was executed. In Gnostic writings, the resurrection was either ignored or viewed as a spiritual event rather than a physical one. There was no settled Gnostic position on these points. Each Gnostic worked out a solution as he or she pleased, freely inventing myths to his or her own satisfaction, borrowing at will from the thoughts of predecessors.*

### ***The Relationship between Christianity and Gnosticism***

*Gnosticism was essentially an attack on historical Christianity or an attempt to infiltrate or undermine it. Gnostics quoted from or alluded to most of the writings which entered our New Testament and wrote in opposition to them or distorted them. In order to entice Christians into accepting their books, Gnostics made out that the books were written by apostles or other famous figures from the Gospels and Acts. In other words, they forged them."*

So, you can see this was a significant problem in the early church, and particularly in John's time. That's why he's writing specifically to address these issues. As I mentioned, notice two main themes that are addressed here in the quotes that I read to you to explain Gnosticism. One is denying that Christ came in the flesh. That He was a flesh and blood human being who was tempted as we are and then died on the cross to be the atonement for all of the sins of mankind. They denied this and twisted it into this strange idea that Christ just appeared to be a physical human, and He really wasn't a flesh and blood human being like the Bible teaches.

The other is this idea that you could connect with God and obtain salvation through this secret knowledge. If you just understand and know this knowledge, well, you don't have to change your behavior. You don't have to repent and stop sinning and harness your human nature and stop yourself from committing sin. You could indulge all your lust and your sinful desires just as long as you had this secret knowledge that would obtain salvation. Well, see if you understand these particular points and then read through the first chapter of 1st John as we're about to do here, you'll see clearly this is obviously what he was addressing. Because as we go through this, we're going to read through the first chapter of 1 John and part of the second chapter.

Notice as we go through this how John is emphasizing that he was a firsthand witness to the ministry of Christ. That he knew Christ personally. He interacted with Him. He heard Him speak. He physically touched Him. He's making it very clear he's a firsthand witness that Christ came in the flesh. He also directly addresses this idea that it's just all about knowledge, and you can just "know God" through this secret knowledge that you have, and you don't have to live a life of obedience because he's specifically addressing this. If you understand this, then you understand the context of what he's addressing in these books, and really what this "spirit of the antichrist" is about. So, to start off with here in 1 John 1 in verse 1.

**1 John 1:1** *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—" (NKJV)*

As we keep reading, we realize the "word of life" he's referring to here is Christ. And see, he's emphasizing that he has interacted with Him. He's heard Him speak. He's touched him. He's making very clear that he's a firsthand witness that Christ came as a physical human being. Continue in verse 2.

*"2) the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3) that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4) And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." (NKJV)*

Now, notice as we continue to read the rest of this, how he's going to make it very, very clear that living a life of obedience and following Christ's example in your behavior is a requirement. That you can't just "know God" through this ethereal knowledge that you're supposed to have. That you have to follow the example that Christ set and change your behavior. Continue in verse 5.

**1 John 1:5** *"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6) If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7) But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 2:1) My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2) And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. 3) Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (NKJV)*

Now keep in mind those who were buying into Gnosticism were thinking how you connect with God and obtain salvation, that's just through intellectual knowledge. That's having this secret knowledge that you know and it's all just an intellectual thing, and you don't have to really change your behavior. He's going to make it very clear here that the way you prove you know God is you live a life of obedience. You change your behavior, and you follow Christ's example. Now, pick up here in verse 4.

*"4) He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (NKJV)*

In other words, you can't just claim I have this knowledge, and I know God because I have this intellectual understanding of this secret knowledge. No, you prove it in your actions. You prove it by how you live your life. That's the evidence that you "know God".

*"5) But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. 6) He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (NKJV)*

In other words, he's emphasizing that we have to follow Christ's example. We have to live a life of obedience. It's not just a matter of having a particular understanding of a subject. Just to illustrate how sometimes those ideas have crept into our lives today. You'll find sometimes there are particular individuals or particular groups that are part of the Church of God movement that will latch onto a particular understanding of this subject or that subject. And they may be correct on the understanding of whatever it is they're emphasizing, but they'll make that one particular pet doctrine. Like, well, you have to understand it this way and anyone who doesn't follow this exact teaching on this exact subject, well, they're second class Christians. They don't really "know God". We know Him because we hold a position on this particular subject.

Again, even if they're right about whatever particular doctrine they're holding up in that regard, that's really getting towards a Gnostic belief where you think, okay, well, the evidence that I'm connected with God and living a righteous life is because I understand this particular subject. Yes, we should seek to understand the full knowledge of God and all that the Bible teaches about it. That's certainly something we should strive to grow in grace and knowledge, but we really prove whether we're following God by our behavior. By how we act and how faithfully we follow the example of Jesus Christ. That's a lesson we can all apply in our lives today.

Now, as I mentioned when we started the sermon even though obviously John here is not ascribing a title of "the Antichrist" as it's oftentimes thrown around. He's not identifying a title for a unique specific individual in the end time, as we saw earlier. However, he does connect this heresy that he's trying to address with the end time. Now, we need to look at why is he doing that? So, just to read this again, look again at 1 John 2:18 because this is the verse where he makes this connection. Again, I'm reading this from the New King James, which does insert the word "the" before antichrist.



**1 John 2:18** *"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour."* (NKJV)

So, obviously by his comment about the last hour, he's basically saying it's the end time. Now, obviously the end didn't come in John's lifetime. John obviously thought that the end would come in his time. He was similar to the Apostle Paul. We won't take the time to turn there, but if you read through 1 Thessalonians 4, when Paul is describing Christ's return and the resurrection of the Firstfruits he refers to the fact that dead in Christ are going to rise first and then he refers to those that are living at the time of Christ's return, but he refers to it as "we who are alive". Well, obviously Paul thought he was going to be living to see Christ return.

Obviously from what you can see from the wording here in 1 John, John was thinking the same thing. They both thought that they were going to live to see Christ's return. Now obviously they were about 2000 years off, but what we need to ask here is the question of why is John attaching this particular heresy of denying that Christ came in the flesh with the end time? Because I think there is a meaningful connection here. To understand that we have to reexamine our popular belief in the Church of God of who the end time beast is and what false religion it is that's going to be pushed on the world by the end time beast power.

Now, I'm only going to give a brief description of this particular subject and touch on the high points of it, because I gave a sermon a few months ago titled "A Fresh Look at the End Time Beast". Now, you can find that on my YouTube channel and my website. There's also a study paper on my website that's titled "The Beast of Revelation" that goes into detail beyond what that particular sermon covers. What you'll see there is I take a closer look at the idea of exactly what empire is it that's going to be the end time beast. Now, just to tie this into the subject we're talking about now, notice that as we've pointed out here and read that John is connecting this heresy that Christ didn't come in the flesh with the end time in saying that is a sign of the end time.

Now, again, the assumption that's oftentimes made in the Church of God is that the end time beast power is going to be a resurrection of the Roman Empire. Well, the assumption that comes with that is that the false religion that will be pushed by this empire is Catholicism. Now, if you look at the beliefs of Catholicism, denying that Christ was a physical human being during His ministry on Earth, and that He physically died as a physical human as the sacrifice for our sins, that's not something that the Catholics deny.

Now, they have their own errors in understanding Christ and the Father and their relationship -- how that works -- because they're Trinitarians. But if you ask a Catholic, did Christ come in the flesh? Was He a flesh and blood human being? They'll say, yes, He was fully human. If you ask them, did He die as any physical human being would die? They will say, yes, He did and then He was resurrected. So, they don't deny that at all. Again, if we take a closer look at this particular subject, we can see and apply who

the correct empire is at the end time, we'll see that there is going to be a religion pushed that very much holds this particular doctrine.

Now, again, I'm only just going to kind of give you a brief overview of this subject. And again, I'm going to refer you to the sermon I mentioned and the study paper for the finer details. Now, you're probably familiar with the fact that the beast power and its various resurrections and the heads of the beast are addressed in Revelation 13 and Revelation 17. If you look at those chapters, there's a consistent picture that's presented. In both chapters you have the beast presented as having 7 heads and 10 horns. Now, if you look at Revelation 12 and its description of Satan himself, you'll also see a similar description, 7 heads and 10 horns.

Now, in my experience in the Church of God growing up all of my life, we've always acknowledged that, but we don't look at it like it's a consistent picture and apply consistency to it. Because we'll look at Revelation 13 and Revelation 17 and acknowledge, yes, they're both talking about the beast power, but we have completely different explanations for those two chapters. We'll look at Revelation 13 and notice the very obvious connections between what's described in that chapter and what Daniel describes in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, and we'll obviously acknowledge that the beast described there in Revelation 13 that's got to include Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Empire.

Then we'll point out that the Persian Empire is there. The Medo-Persians and the Greco-Macedonian Empire is there. The Bible identifies those empires, and we'll connect all that together and say, well, of course Revelation 13 includes that. Then we'll turn to Revelation 17, and we'll look at 7 heads and 10 horns. We'll say, well, no, this is all just Rome. Even though Revelation 13 told us that there was a false religious system that worked in conjunction with these political empires throughout time, and we know that that false religious system there, it's got to include all the pagan religions that were involved in Babylon and Medo-Persia and the Greco-Macedonian Empire. *It's got to be much bigger than Catholicism.*

We'll look at Revelation 17 and say, well, the harlot there, that can only be Catholicism, and we try to make everything Rome. The reason for that is because there's an obvious red flag -- if we just read it the way it's written on the page -- that points out to us that we have a major problem with making the Roman Empire the end time beast. To notice that, turn over to Revelation 17. Again, we're just going to briefly touch on this subject, and if you want all the details, I would refer you to the sermon and the study paper that I mentioned. Let's pick up in Revelation 17:7.

**Rev 17:7** *"But the angel said to me, 'Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. 8) The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

9) *"Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits."* (NKJV)

Now notice in particular verse 10, because here's the thing that, if we're just consistent with our logic, train wrecks our theory that the end time beast is a resurrection of Rome. It's in verse 10.

*"10) There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time."* (NKJV)

Now, if we look at this and we just interpret it the way it's written on the page, we're going to have a major problem with making the Roman Empire the end time beast. Because the way this was typically explained in the Church of God -- the explanations I grew up being taught from childhood and even was taught in Ambassador College when I attended -- is they would apply verse 10 as if it was written to someone in the 20th century. They would say, well, the "one that is", that's Mussolini during World War II.

Well, let's just read what's on the page. What does it say on the page? It says it's an angel. He's talking to the Apostle John. And the time setting is the 1st century. John hearing that, it would never cross John's mind to think I'm supposed to interpret this in regards to World War II and Mussolini. That just wouldn't cross John's mind at all. John would look at that and think, okay, if five have fallen, well that means five are prior to my lifetime and the Roman Empire I'm experiencing. And if you told John "one is", John would think that must be the Roman Empire that he's experiencing in his lifetime. And if there's another one to come after this, well, then that's some other empire that's going to come after this. That's how John would understand this. He wouldn't come up with Mussolini in World War II. I think we have to acknowledge that interpreting this as if it's written to the 20th century is a very creative way to interpret this. Well, if we just read what's on the page, we come up with a completely different conclusion.

Now, as I pointed out before, if we assume it's all consistent -- that Revelation 13 and Revelation 17 are talking about the same 7 heads and 10 horns. Well, we know from Revelation 13, it's obviously talking about what Daniel spoke about in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. So, turn over to Daniel 2. Again, we're only going to briefly touch on this, but I want you to see a verse that's an obvious red flag that we've made a false assumption regarding who the fourth empire is there. Because the Bible identifies the first three. If you read through these chapters here, particularly in Daniel 2, it directly tells you the first empire is Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Empire, that was ruling at the time. Because Daniel directly tells him that as he's interpreting the dream.

The Bible also identifies the Medo-Persian Empire that conquers them. That's recorded in the book of Daniel. It also records in the book the Greco-Macedonian Empire. That's directly mentioned. So, the Bible identifies those first three empires. It doesn't directly tell us who the fourth one is. It does give us a clue though, and let's notice what that clue is. It's Daniel 2:40.

**Dan 2:40** *“And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.”* (NKJV)

Now, those other three empires didn't exist concurrently, as we know. They existed progressively through time. Well, the only way that that fourth empire can conquer all of the others and crush all of them is to take over all of the territory that the other empires had. Now spend 10 minutes on Google and look up the maps that these empires covered, and there's something that's going to scream at you. You won't be able to deny it. If you look at the Babylonian Empire -- Nebuchadnezzar's Neo Babylonian Empire -- and use that as your basis to start because that was the context of which Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 covered. Then you look at the Medo-Persian Empire that came later. You'll see it covers most of that area, and they typically get a little bigger each time. Then you look at the Greco-Macedonian Empire, it covers that same basic area. Again, some of the outer boundary lines might be a little different, but they tend to keep getting bigger.

Then look at where the Roman Empire was and the area that they covered. Now, not only did it not cover the territory of all three of the other empires combined it only covered a fraction of that. That empire didn't cover the main area where Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel were in the context of what was being addressed in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. See, that's oftentimes what we miss. What was interesting to me when I first started looking into this a few years ago, is I went back and looked at the booklets I'd read as a kid growing up in Worldwide. The booklet addressing the beast acknowledged what I mentioned here about verse 40 and said that the only way that this fourth empire could meet this criteria is to conquer the territory of all of the other empires combined. It totally agreed with that.

Then it made the dogmatic statement that Rome conquered the area covered by all of these other three combined. *That's not even close to accurate.* If you just spend 10 minutes on Google -- *please fact check me on this* -- you won't be able to deny it. Look at the maps, and you'll see only a small fraction of the territory of the other three empires combined, did Rome ever conquer. And Rome never had the core area of Babylon where Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel were. So, if we take all of this into consideration, we've misinterpreted what that fourth empire was.

Then if we look at history to see what other empire does match that criteria, the Islamic Caliphate Empire that conquered Rome and came after the Roman Empire. If you look at the map of what they covered, it absolutely matches that criteria. It covered a huge area of all of the Middle East, northern Africa, and even into Southern Europe. If you look at all of that, it covered the area of all of the others. It matched this criteria. The false religion that went with it was Islam.

Now, if we look at the Islamic religion and how does it view Christ? What we're going to see here is a very similar view of denying that Christ came in the flesh. And if we take all this into consideration, it then makes perfect sense why John would say this spirit of antichrist -- denying that Christ came in the flesh -- that's a sign of the end time. Well, if

you look at the Islamic Caliphate Empire -- a resurrection of that being the end time beast -- then these completely match. Now, let me share with you part of an article I pulled off the internet explaining the Islamic view of Christ. You're going to see it's very similar to some of the concepts that we've addressed with Gnosticism. Now, I got this article off of a website called blueletterbible.org. The title of the article is How Does Islam Understand the Death and Resurrection of Jesus? Again, I'm not reading the entire article, but I'm going to read some excerpts from it here.

*"The central message of the New Testament is the death and resurrection of Jesus, the promised Messiah. Three days after His death on the cross, Jesus was alive forevermore.*

*While Muslims accept Jesus Christ as a great prophet they do not believe the New Testament account about His death on the cross or His resurrection from the dead. Their view can be summed up as follows.*

### **1. Jesus Did Not Die on the Cross**

*The Quran teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross. Muslims do not believe that Allah would allow one of their prophets to be killed in the manner Jesus was killed. Instead of dying on the cross, He was protected from a death of crucifixion. The Quran says,..."*

Now the article is directly quoting from the Quran. What I'm about to read here is quoted from Quran 4:156-159.

*"And for their unbelief, and their uttering against Mary a mighty calumny, and for their saying, "We slew the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God"...yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them. Those who are at variance concerning him surely are in doubt regarding him, they have no knowledge of him, except the following of surmise; and they did not slay him of certainty...no indeed; God raised him up to Him; God is Almighty, All-Wise. There is not one of the People of the Book but will assuredly believe in him before his death, and on the Resurrection Day, he will be a witness against them. (Quran 4:156-159)"*

Now, that ends the quote directly from the Quran. And now it's back to what the authors of the Blue Letter Bible article stated.

*"It was not Jesus that was crucified, but only a likeness of Him. According to Islam, it was Judas or Simon the Cyrene, the man who carried Jesus' cross, which was actually crucified in His place. It was not Jesus that died on the cross. This is something which Islam insists upon."*

So, you can see that the reason that John was connecting this heresy, that Christ didn't come in the flesh that He wasn't really a flesh and blood human being that died for us. He connects that as a sign of the end time. Is because the false religion that will be pushed by the end time beast power is Islamic. It's Islam. It's not Catholicism. Because again, if you look at Catholicism, they have their heretical views of who Christ is and God the Father is, because they have a Trinitarian view of things.

Again, ask a Catholic, did Christ come in in the flesh? Was He a flesh and blood human being who died? And they'll say, yes, He was fully human. Now again, they're going to mix Trinitarian concepts into all of this, but they do not deny that Christ came in the flesh. Again, as I just read, the Islamic view of Christ in His physical ministry is in many ways similar to the Gnostic view in terms of whether or not Christ came actually in the flesh as a flesh and blood human being.

Well, for the rest of the sermon, what I'd like to also address here is some things we can learn from this in our time today. I'm going to illustrate here that there have been some Gnostic related beliefs that have made their way into the Church of God that are related to this concept of denying Christ being fully in the flesh. Also, as we're going to see, there's an application of denying the Father, and we'll see that a little later. There was one reference there in 1 John 2, where he mentioned not just denying Christ, but denying the Father.

Now to give you the context of what I'm referring to here. If you've been in the Church of God for a number of decades particularly in the late 80s and early 90s, then you probably experienced the point where a lot of false doctrines got introduced into the Church of God, and the Worldwide organization basically abandoned everything that we had ever believed previous to that timeframe. Well, in the late 80s and early 90s, I was attending Ambassador College while this was taking place.

In 1989, one of my professors, he was teaching a class we called Fundamentals of Theology, but he was teaching there that Christ really couldn't be tempted to sin. In other words, he wasn't denying that Christ was a physical human being. But he was basically teaching the idea that Christ didn't have to deal with the temptations of sin the way the book of Hebrews directly says that He did. He was basically teaching that Christ was kind of like this robot that was just in a physical body that was just going through the motions, but He was impervious to sin. These tests really didn't mean anything. He didn't really have to overcome as the book of Hebrews directly tells us.

Again, he wasn't fully denying that Christ was a flesh and blood human being. He didn't go quite that far, but he was leading very much in this heretical direction. Now, the way that they justified this was in James 1. You can turn over to James 1. They were misapplying a scripture here that really isn't directly addressing Christ at all, but it was James 1:12.

**James 1:12** *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those*

*who love Him. 13) Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15) Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. 16) Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. 18) Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."* (NKJV)

Now what occurred there in 1989, as I mentioned, is my professor at AC was reading through this and he was saying, well, see Christ having been a God being, well, He's just impervious to sin and wasn't really tempted as the book of Hebrews directly says. The way he tried to get around the scriptures that directly tell us that Christ was tempted, is like, well, He was just "tested" and it wasn't "tempted" but the whole idea was that Christ didn't have to harness His human nature to fight against sin. He was basically just kind of a robot going through this.

In fact, a good friend of mine -- he had actually had been one of my other professors at Ambassador College -- but we were in the same organization after we both left Worldwide. He used to jokingly refer to that heresy as the "doctrine of Robo-Christ". The reason he would refer to it is that there was a popular movie around that time called Robocop. It was about this robot that was a police officer and was invincible because it was this strong robot. But he was making a joke off of that. That's what they were trying to turn Christ into. That He was kind of this automaton robot who didn't have to fight the temptations of sin.

Well, see if we understand what the book of Hebrews teaches us, it directly says He faced all the temptations that we do. Now, He never sinned. He never gave into that, but He definitely felt that. Just to see that turnover to Hebrews 4, we'll see here a couple of verses that directly tell us that not only was Christ a flesh and blood human being, but He had to battle the temptations of the flesh that we feel. This is Hebrews 4:14.

**Heb 4:14** *"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (NKJV)

See, He can sympathize because again, He felt the same temptations. Now again, He successfully endured through it and never sinned. But being a flesh and blood human, He felt the pulls of the flesh and had to fight them. To see another verse that addresses this, let's turn over to Hebrews 2, and we'll pick up in verse 14.

**Heb 2:14** *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15) and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16) For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. 17) Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18) For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”* (NKJV)

See, it directly tells us Christ was a flesh and blood human being who faced the temptations of the flesh that we face. Now, again, He never gave into them. He never sinned. He lived a perfect life. But again, it's a blasphemous heresy to say that He didn't feel this. That He didn't go through those temptations. That He wasn't fully in the flesh. See, my point is, what was happening there was a milder version of the spirit of antichrist. It was coming into the Church. That is what was happening there.

Now, there's another application of the spirit of antichrist that has been taught in the Church of God my entire life. And, unfortunately, is still very much embraced by most Church of God organizations today. To see that turnover to 1 John 2. We read this earlier, but I just want to cover again a verse that we touched on earlier. As I mentioned all throughout this sermon one of the big things that John emphasized in addressing the spirit of antichrist was denying that Christ came in the flesh. But he also mentions here that it also has to do with denying the Father. We're going to see here in a moment how the Gnostics denied the Father and what their view of Him was. This is in 1 John 2:22.

**1 John 2:22** *“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. 23) Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”* (NKJV)

Notice that he refers to denying the Father. Now, again, as we've seen before, what John was addressing here in 1 John was the heresy of Gnosticism. Well, now we just need to look at what was the Gnostic view of God the Father? Because if we look at that, we can see a direct connection here with an idea that unfortunately made its way into the Church of God and is still taught today by most Church of God organizations. To clarify this, I'm going to read to you a section of an article I pulled off of a website called [biblicaltraining.org](http://biblicaltraining.org). Again, I'm just going to read to you a short section from this article. It's explaining Gnosticism and their view of God the Father.

*“GNOSTICISM... Their main themes were as follows: The true God is pure spirit and dwells in the realm of pure light, totally separated from this dark world. This world is evil, for it is made of matter, and matter is evil. The true God will have nothing to do with it, for it was created by a lesser god and was a mistake. People in this world are normally made of body and mind, but in a few there is a spark of pure spirit. Such “spiritual” people need to be rescued from this evil*



*world; thus there is need for a Savior. Jesus, who is pure spirit even though he appears to be body and mind, is the Savior who comes from the true God in light to bring knowledge (gnōsis) of the spiritual realm of light. Therefore those who have the spark of spirit can receive the knowledge and be reunited with the true God."*

So, as you can see here, not only do they have a heretical view of human nature, but their view of God the Father is that He can't have anything to do with matter. He can't have anything to do with creation. In fact, they go so far as to say He's not even really the creator God. They have Him as the source of true light, but He can't have anything to do with this inferior physical creation. Well, that's the part I'm going to focus on, because, unfortunately, this particular belief has found its way into the Church of God. Because the way it typically manifests itself and what's taught in the Church of God today is the idea that God the Father, He can't be in the presence of sin. He can't be involved at all with inferior, sinful beings.

As a result, typically the plan of God is presented that He can't directly be involved in physical creation. He's not really involved during the millennium or any of the plan of salvation for mankind. He just simply comes down and directly is involved after everything is over and everyone's been turned into spirit. Well, this is a very easy idea to debunk if we just pay attention to what the Bible says. Because just think about this idea of saying that God the Father can't be in the presence of sin. I think all of us would very easily agree to the idea that Satan is the ultimate sinner. He's the originator of sin. We might say -- to put it in modern day terminology -- he's the poster child for sin. He's the ultimate sinner and we can very easily demonstrate from the Bible, God the Father having direct interaction right at His throne with Satan the devil.

So, turn over to Job 1. We'll see examples here in Job 1 and 2, where God the Father is having direct conversations with Satan the devil. They're face to face with each other at God the Father's throne. So, obviously He can interact with sin because again, Satan is the ultimate sinner. Let's pick up here in Job 1:6.

**Job 1:6** *"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. 7) And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it." 8) Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" 9) So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10) Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11) But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" 12) And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD." (NKJV)*

So, notice here Satan is directly in the presence of God the Father, and Satan is the ultimate sinner. Obviously, God the Father can interact with sin. And there's another example of this if we just look over in Job 2 and pick up in verse 1.

**Job 2:1** *“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. 2) And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” 3) Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.” 4) So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. 5) But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” 6) And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.” 7) So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.” (NKJV)*

See, not only do we have these references here in the book of Job. In the book of Revelation, specifically in chapter 12, it also describes Satan before the throne of God the Father. This particular reference is absolutely undeniable because it's going to mention God the Father and Christ and make it clear that the God we're talking about that Satan's interacting with is the Father. There's no way to reason around this one. This is in Revelation 12:7.

**Rev 12:7** *“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8) but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9) So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10) Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.” (NKJV)*

So, notice he was before “our God”, and “our God” has “His Christ”. So, we know “our God” is the Father. There's no way around it. So, obviously God the Father, if He can interact with Satan, He can interact with sinful humans because we also have to keep in mind the Father dwells through His spirit directly in sinful humans. I mean, yes, we have to repent. We have to accept the sacrifice of Christ, which reconciles us to Him, but then His presence dwells in us. That's why we're referred to as “His temple”, because we are in the New Covenant Church. If we're converted and have the Holy Spirit, we're the “temple of God”. We're where He dwells -- His presence dwells -- and it's in sinful humans. Just to notice this, turn over to 1 Corinthians 3 and we'll pick up in verse 16.

**1 Cor 3:16** *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17) If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."* (NKJV)

See, the whole reason why it refers to us as His temple is because He dwells inside us. Again, the Bible directly tells us it's the Father who's doing that because look over in 2 Corinthians 6. It's going to directly tell us that it's the Father who's dwelling in us. It's 2 Corinthians 6:14.

**2 Cor 6:14** *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15) And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16) And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God..."* (NKJV)

Notice we're going to see here in a minute. It's very clear in the Bible who the living God is. That's the Father. But continue on in verse 16.

*"...As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."* (NKJV)

Now, notice the living God said, "I am going to dwell within them." That's who's going to dwell in converted, but yet still sinful, carnal human beings. Now, if we turn over to Matthew 16, Christ is going to confirm for us exactly who the living God is because we don't have to speculate at all. We're going to read the account here where Christ asks Peter who do you think I am, but let's just notice the answer here, and then what Christ confirms. This is Matthew 16, and we'll start in verse 13.

**Matt 16:13** *"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" 14) So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15) He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16) Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (NKJV)

Notice the living God has to be the Father. Now, notice verse 17.

*"17) Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."* (NKJV)

See, Peter says, "You're the son of the living God." So, the living God is the Father. And Christ says, you got it right. So, we know for a fact the living God is the Father, and that's who's dwelling in us. In fact, the whole explanation of referring to us as the "temple of God" is because of the spirit dwelling in us. That whole explanation is based upon the historical fact that Israel was familiar with a building called the temple where the presence of the Father dwelt. We can confirm that because Christ referred to it as

“my Father's house”. It was the house where His Father dwelt. If you turn to John 2, we can see that. It's John 2. We'll start reading in verse 13.

**John 2:13** *“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14) And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. 15) When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16) And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!” (NKJV)*

It was His Father's house. The house where His Father's presence would dwell. So, that's why we're referred to as the “temple of God” in the New Covenant Church, or that we are the temple. Why? Because He dwells in us. Well, if the Father through His spirit can dwell in us, He can be in the presence of sin. See, what happened was a part of this spirit of antichrist -- again, it's a heresy not a specific individual -- had made its way into the Church of God. You see, brethren as I have explained from the beginning of the sermon, the term “antichrist” unfortunately oftentimes gets applied as if it's a title for a specific individual in the end time.

Now again, the concept, the heresy that he was addressing, aspects of that are going to be very relevant at the end time. Because, as I mentioned, the end time beast is going to be a resurrection of the Islamic Caliphate Empire. Islam has a very similar view of Christ as the Gnostics did. Both deny that Christ came in the flesh. So, that's the application of how we're going to see the spirit of antichrist affect the whole world when that comes about.

We also need to be on guard ourselves today to make sure that we don't fall into some of these ideas like the 1st century Church did and start accepting some of these concepts of Gnosticism. Because, if we do, then we become those who are adopting part of the spirit of antichrist. So, brethren, as we go forward from this Sabbath, let's appreciate that we have John's example here to warn us about this spirit of antichrist. To realize that it's not identifying a specific individual, but it is identifying a specific heresy for us that's going to be extant as we get closer and closer to the end. And it's also something that we need to be aware of in our own personal lives so that we don't fall victim to the spirit of antichrist.