

1 John 4:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. John presents the negative test—denial of Christ's incarnation reveals false teaching. "Every spirit that confesseth not" (kai pan pneuma ho mē homologei)—the negative emphasizes willful rejection or denial, not mere ignorance. Some manuscripts read "divides Jesus" or "denies Jesus," but the meaning is consistent—rejecting the incarnation's truth.

"Is not of God" (ek tou theou ouk estin)—such teaching doesn't originate from God but from another source. "And this is that spirit of antichrist" (kai touto estin to tou antichristou)—the definite article identifies a specific entity. Antichristos (ἀντίχριστος) means against or instead of Christ—both opposing Christ and offering a counterfeit substitute. John introduced this term earlier (2:18, 22), warning that many antichrists exist, though a final Antichrist will come.

"Whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (ho akēkoate hoti erchetai kai nyn en tō kosmō estin ēdē). The spirit of antichrist was expected eschatologically but operates currently. This "already but not yet" pattern pervades Scripture—the kingdom has come but awaits consummation; antichrist's spirit is present but the person will appear later. False

teaching denying Christ is antichrist's work, whether in the first century or today. The test remains unchanged—does teaching confess Jesus Christ's incarnation truthfully?

Historical Context

The concept of antichrist developed from Jewish apocalyptic expectation of a final enemy opposing God's Messiah (Daniel 7:24-27, 11:36-45). Paul described the "man of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10). John's contribution was identifying the spirit of antichrist already active in false teaching, particularly denying Christ's incarnation. This challenged believers to recognize that eschatological evil wasn't merely future but present in subtle forms.

Throughout church history, various figures have been identified as Antichrist—Roman emperors, papal corruption (by Reformers), political tyrants. While debate continues about a final personal Antichrist, John's point is clear—the antichrist spirit manifests in any teaching that denies Christ's true nature, especially His incarnation. Vigilance against such false teaching is always necessary.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How can you recognize the spirit of antichrist in contemporary teaching that subtly denies Christ's incarnation?
2. What's the relationship between the many antichrists currently active and the final Antichrist expected to come?
3. Why does denial of Christ's incarnation specifically characterize the spirit of antichrist rather than other theological errors?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	πᾶν	πνεῦμα	ὅ	μὴ	όμολογεῖ	τὸν	Ἰησοῦν	Χριστὸν	
And	every	spirit	that	not	confeseth		that Jesus	Christ	
G2532	G3956	G4151	G3739	G3361	G3670	G3588	G2424	G5547	
ἐν	σαρκὶ	ἔρχεται	ἐκ	τοῦ	Θεοῦ	οὐκ	ἐστὶν	καὶ	τοῦτο
in	the flesh	is come	of		God	not	is	And	this
G1722	G4561	G2064	G1537	G3588	G2316	G3756	G2076	G2532	G5124
ἐστὶν	τὸ	τοῦ	ἀντιχρίστου	ὅ	ἀκηκόατε	ὅτι	ἔρχεται		
is	G3588	G3588	that spirit of antichrist	that	ye have heard	that	is come		
G2076			G500	G3739	G191	G3754	G2064		
καὶ	νῦν	ἐν	τῷ	κόσμῳ	ἐστὶν	ἥδη			
And	now	in	G3588	the world	is	already			
G2532	G3568	G1722		G2889	G2076	G2235			

Additional Cross-References

1 John 2:22 (References Jesus): Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

2 John 1:7 (References Jesus): 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.

1 John 2:18 (References Christ): 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.