

2 John 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. John identifies the urgent threat: "many deceivers are entered into the world" (Greek polloi planoi exēlthon eis ton kosmon, πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον). The word "deceivers" (planoi, πλάνοι) denotes those who lead astray, causing others to wander from truth. The verb "are entered" (perfect tense exēlthon, ἐξῆλθον) indicates they have gone out with continuing effect—their influence persists.

These deceivers "confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (Greek tous mē homologountas Iēsoun Christon erchomenon en sarki, τοὺς μὴ ὁμολογοῦντας Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκὶ). The present participle "coming" (erchomenon) may emphasize the continuing significance of the incarnation rather than merely its historical occurrence. "In flesh" (Greek en sarki, ἐν σαρκὶ) affirms Jesus' genuine humanity—He possessed real flesh, not a phantom body or temporary appearance.

This Christological confession is the litmus test of orthodoxy. Early Docetists taught that Christ only appeared human but wasn't truly incarnate, since they believed spirit was good and matter evil. John declares such teachers are both "a deceiver" (singular, ho planos, ὁ πλάνος) and "an antichrist" (Greek ho antichristos, ὁ ἀντίχριστος). "Antichrist" means one who opposes Christ or presents a false christ. While John elsewhere speaks of a final Antichrist (1 John

2:18), here he identifies the spirit of antichrist already active through false teachers who deny essential truths about Jesus' person and work. The incarnation is non-negotiable—denying it destroys the gospel.

Historical Context

By the late first century, Christological heresies proliferated. Docetism (from Greek *dokeō*, "to seem") taught that Christ only seemed to have a body but was actually pure spirit. Cerinthianism distinguished between the man Jesus and the divine Christ who temporarily indwelt him. Both denied the permanent union of full deity and full humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ.

These heresies had devastating implications: if Christ didn't truly become flesh, He couldn't truly die, making atonement impossible. If He didn't genuinely take on human nature, He couldn't serve as humanity's representative or High Priest. If the divine Christ merely inhabited the human Jesus temporarily, there is no permanent mediator between God and humanity. The incarnation is thus foundational to salvation—deny it and the gospel collapses.

John calls these teachers "antichrist" not merely as invective but as theological diagnosis. Anyone who denies the incarnation, regardless of their claims to Christian identity, opposes the true Christ and presents a false alternative. The early church recognized that Christological orthodoxy was not peripheral but central. The great ecumenical councils (Nicaea, Constantinople, Chalcedon) would later codify what John here asserts: Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, united in one person forever. Deviation from this truth places one outside Christian faith, regardless of other teachings or practices.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What modern theological positions or religious movements effectively deny the incarnation while claiming Christian identity?
2. Why is the incarnation essential to the gospel—what would be lost if Christ weren't truly God and truly man?
3. How can we discern false teaching about Christ's person, especially when it uses biblical language or claims Christian authority?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	πολλοὶ	πλάνος	εἰσῆλθον	εἰς	ό	κόσμον	ό	μὴ
For	many	a deceiver	are entered	into	who	the world	who	not
G3754	G4183	G4108	G1525	G1519	G3588	G2889	G3588	G3361
όμολογοῦντες	Ίησοῦν	Χριστὸν	έρχόμενον	ἐν	σαρκί·			
confess	that Jesus	Christ	is come	in	the flesh			
G3670	G2424	G5547	G2064	G1722	G4561			
οὗτός	ἐστιν	ό	πλάνος	καὶ	ό	ἀντίχριστος		
This	is	who	a deceiver	and	who	an antichrist		
G3778	G2076	G3588	G4108	G2532	G3588	G500		

Additional Cross-References

1 John 2:26 (Parallel theme): These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

John 1:14 (Parallel theme): And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

1 Timothy 3:16 (Parallel theme): And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

