
The Epistles of John

“They’re Here!”

1 John 2:18-27

Back in the 90’s, when I first taught on these epistles, I had been reading a book that showed why scripture stated the Rapture would occur on September 28th, 1992. I guess, since we’re here, either none of us have been saved, scripture is wrong, or heaven forbid, the author of the book didn’t know what he was talking about.

Of course there were others who held for October 10th of that same year. I guess it didn’t happen then either. Some opted for October 28th, or then again Rosh Hashanah, 1994. And some Christians bought and still buy into this stuff. You’d think people would finally get it, but then again I guess Christ didn’t either because He said:

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matthew 24:36).

Obviously this doesn’t preclude knowing the week, month, or the year though. People want to know something others don’t. It gives a sense of superiority. And these people don’t want teachings of Scripture to interfere, so they find ways to show the words of scripture don’t teach what they teach.

Now, I’m sure many of these individuals love the Lord. They’re probably believers. They get caught up in things like “Millennial Madness,” or Deliverance Ministry, or the Shepherding Movement, and while these teachings can be harmful to individual believers and make Christians look like idiots, they don’t usually contradict foundational truths of Scripture.

But, over the years a number of individuals, who have started off simply being eccentric, have moved from side issues to denying the basic truths of Scripture. And when this occurs, they have taken immature believers with them. These teachers, who appeared to be Christians, obviously aren’t. These people come in the spirit of Anti-Christ—and, **They’re Here!** ... John speaks to this specific concern in the passage we are examining this morning.

I Introduction	
II Many Anti-christs	Verses 18-19
III One Truth	Verses 20-23
IV Hold on to the Truth	Verses 24-25
V Live in Your Anointing	Verses 26-27
VI Conclusion	

I Introduction: John was concerned that believers would stay true to their walk with God. He didn’t want them lead astray which was a very real danger because of the heresies being propagated by false teachers. and it was important these believers demonstrated their love of God. They were not to get caught up in behaviors motivated by love of the world.

One major reason not to love the world was that any satisfaction derived from such love is at best ephemeral and at worst delusional. Service to God, and relationship with Him, is eternal in nature. Service to the world and relationship with it is transitory in nature...

II Many Anti-Christ: Verse 18: So, in this section John notes just how transitory the world is. He states that his readers were living in the last hour. Obviously, John was living in expectation of Christ's return. And when Christ came He would shut the world down and establish His kingdom. Was John wrong?

... After all, here we are some two thousand years later, and seeing examples of Millennial Madness, as the Christian Research Institute calls it. People are looking for the Lord's return any minute. Are they wrong?

... First, we know that Scripture is without error. We know the writers of Scripture, both the Old and New Covenants, were inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore did not make mistakes.

“All Scripture is God-breathed...” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Consequently, John was not in error when he identified this period as the last hour. So what is the last hour? For clarity let me quote Glenn Baker who puts the concept fairly succinctly:

“The term ‘last hour’ occurs only here in the NT. Like the similar terms ‘the last days’ and ‘the last times’ it owes much to OT expectations.”

“The NT writers thought of the ‘last days’ in two ways. Theologically they connected this period to the new age that they associated with the advent of Jesus.... In Acts the new age is referred to as the ‘days to come’ and is signaled by the pouring forth of the Spirit (2:17) and salvation through the calling on the name of the Lord (2:21). The NT writers did not believe the new age had completely come. They recognized it as being present provisionally in Christ and in the Holy Spirit.”

“They also used the term ‘last days’ eschatologically to designate the last days before Christ’s return.”¹

The NIV Study Bible Notes speaks to this phrase by stating:

“With other NT writers, John viewed the whole period beginning with Christ’s first coming as the last days (see Ac 2:17; 2Ti 3:1; Heb 1:2; 1Pe 1:20). They understood this to be the “last” of the days because neither former prophecy nor new revelation concerning the history of salvation indicated the coming of another era before the return of Christ. The word “last” in “last days,” “last times” and “last hour” also expresses a sense of urgency and imminence. The Christian is to be alert, waiting for the return of Christ (Mt 25:1-13).”²

“... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” (Hebrews 1:2).

John, in this letter, refers to the last hour as the period between the ascension and the return of Christ. And one of the proofs of this is the presence of many anti-christs. After all, who was the one who warned these anti-christs were a sign of the end times? The Lord said:

¹ Baker, Glenn W., The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol 12, 1, 2, 3 John, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981, p. 323-324.

² NIV Study Bible Notes, The Zondervan Corporation, 1985.

“For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. — For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible” (Matthew 24:5, 24).

Verse 19: *Why does John say that anti-christs come from us? What is it that makes these individuals unique?* John calls the false teachers, anti-christs. These individuals who were acting against the teachings of Scripture, the Apostles and most importantly Christ, were men who had been part of the local Christian community. Some speculate they had been members of the Apostolic churches in Jerusalem. It maybe they had actually withdrawn from the church to which John was writing.

Often some of the greatest heretics are individuals who came out of the Christian community. This was true in John’s day, and it continues to be true in ours. This confirms the “last hour” has continued since the time of the early church. For since the birth of the church and until Christ does return, the greatest attacks on truth come from those who call represent themselves as Christians. But these individuals are in reality anti-christs. And, we must be willing to recognize them as such. John’s concern is believers will always stand firmly for God’s truth.

These individual’s false teachings are proof that they never were believers. We have seen this quite clearly as some well known televangelists have gone from simply bad teaching, such as positive confession, to full blown heresies such as we are all little gods and Jesus’ descent to hell, not his death on the cross, ... redeemed sinners.

III One Truth: Verses 20-21: Apparently, because of John’s next words, these false teachers had claimed a unique anointing as the foundation for their claims to have revealed truth. So, John contrasts this supposed anointing with the believers’ actual one.

Baker notes the false teachers”

“... probably claimed superior knowledge because they had received an exclusive ritual anointing that gave them knowledge (gnosis).”³

In contrast believers have all received the true anointing which is the Holy Spirit. Consequently, they have access to that which is true. This is a general statement dealing with truth, and reflects an understanding of basic foundational doctrines denied by the false teachers or anti-christs.

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Acts 2:17).

John was simply reminding his readers that because they had truth, they should be able to recognize where there are lies, there is no truth. Frequently naive believers hold, speaking of these heretics, though what they are teaching is wrong, these men love the Lord. And since they do, they should be accepted as brothers in Christ. But the Lord has sent us to minister with wisdom. As He said:

³ Ibid., p. 325

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

John would argue though that if these teachers are lying about Christ, salvation, the Christian walk, etc., they are not part of the body and have no part of the truth. Believers must stand for the orthodox teachings of Scripture and reject individuals who teach something else. This doesn't represent a judgmental spirit, but the same kind of discernment seen in the Bereans.

“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11).

Verses 22-23: While it appears to many of us that scripture teaches there will be a specific individual known as the Antichrist, the spirit of anti-christ has been present in the world since the birth of the church. Anyone who rejects biblical teachings regarding Christ's identity, His virgin birth, deity, sacrificial and intercessory roles, comes in the spirit of anti-christ.

The Antichrist is an individual who tries to convince the world that he stands in the place of Christ, while at the same time teaching that which is contrary to God's word. Those who function as anti-christs are primarily identified as such because of their false teachings.

Sun Myung Moon would be an example of striving to stand in the place of Christ. He teaches that he has come to complete the work that Jesus left unfinished when he allowed Himself to be crucified. He makes of himself a christ.

Heretical televangelists are primarily contradicting the truth of Scripture. Those who teach the “little god” view are also trying to put themselves in the place of Christ and are therefore anti-christs.

By the way these two verses are excellent in illuminating the anti-christ spirit of cults such as the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints and the Jehovah Witnesses, both of whom deny the Triunity of God, and the co-equality of Christ. John says to reject the Son is to reject the Father. One can not be obedient to *Yahweh*, without being obedient to *Y'shua*. Unfortunately, even Jews fall in this position, when claiming to worship God, they reject Christ as God.

IV Hold on to the Truth: In contrast then to the unbelievers, the believer knows truth, that Christ is God and salvation only comes through Him. They are to hold on to this truth and because they accepted this truth they have received eternal life, and eternal relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

V Live in Your Anointing: John concludes this section by reminding his readers that he wants them to clearly understand the differences between that which is being propagated by the false teachers, and that which they know because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

These believers have the true anointing of the Holy Spirit versus the esoteric anointing claimed by false teachers. They didn't need the teachings of some specific individuals who claimed to have the only truth.

Note though, John wasn't saying because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in each believer, they don't need teachers. After all Paul said:

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12)

Again, since John is teaching with this letter, clearly he isn't saying believers don't need teachers. What John is saying though is these believers don't need to fall into the false teachers' traps. These teachers taught they were the only conduit of some mysterious secret teaching. Only they have truth and people must follow them.

In contrast the believers have Scripture, the Apostles' teachings, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. There are no hidden truths, as the cults claim. There is truth accessible to all under the leading of the Holy Spirit. So, believers are called to

“... not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

And as they tested the words of teachers against Scripture and in dependency on the Holy Spirit they were protected against the attacks of the anti-christs.

VI Conclusion: *In what way can believers be lead astray? In what way can't they?* Believers can fall into a trap of believing they're the only ones who have their act together doctrinally. Yes, Christians can fall into this line of thinking. One pastor, clearly no scholar, has come up with a new view of the Rapture. So now after two thousand years, only he has discovered the hidden truth. I don't know about you, but as for me, I find the whole thing very suspect.

The secret knowledge approach always has appeal. Even Christians have been known to buy into it. Let's face it, there is appeal to pride to think, “I know something most people don't. I know the church age has ended. Look at all those sinful souls still attending.”

And elitism is still a problem within the church. We all know historically some denominations have felt that only they had the truth and therefore acted as if they were better than anyone else. This isn't to say these teachings are of the spirit of anti-christ, just that it is easy to fall into the trap of believing we have something no one else has.

This is been a problem in certain wings of the charismatic movement where some have taught that only those who spoke in tongue have experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As a result tongues became the mark of the elite, the upper class Christian. This is in spite of the fact Paul clearly taught everyone isn't required to speak in tongues.

“And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to

help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts” (1 Corinthians 13:28-31).

Every cult has taught this. The basic premise is that the truth of scripture has been lost since the days of the early church, and only they have discovered it. So for some seventeen hundred, eighteen hundred or nineteen hundred years no body could be saved. But now salvation has arrived because they have found the secret, or better yet, lost teaching.

Now John is concerned about getting entangled in doctrines that are clearly contrary to Scripture. The problem isn't with peripheral issues such as tongues, the timing of the rapture or even method of baptism. Where the problem arises is when the view that only we have truth moves the individual to begin to accept teaching that transitions from simply being controversial to being heretical.

I am sure that there are believers who have fallen for the teachings of the “Name it and Claim it” movement. And sadly I suspect that there are some very immature believers that still think certain televangelists are actually believers.

But John makes it clear we do not need to be lead astray. We can demand doctrinal orthodoxy within the local church. We have Scripture and we must know it. We have the Holy Spirit and we must depend on Him. We are to test what ever we are taught, even if I'm teaching it, against God's word.

As we spend time in prayer and study, as we stand firm for the historic Christian faith, we will not be led astray.

“ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming” (Ephesians 4:14).

Those who change direction with every new fad, are not just ignorant, they are unwilling to do the hard work of staying close to God and in His word.

The message of this section is we live in the last hour. We know this because the spirit of anti-christ is active. And those who give out heresy often come out of the Church.

We are to be alert for the problem. We are to hold fast to truth, requiring time in the word. And, we are to depend on the Holy Spirit, Who indwelling us will give us discernment, if we truly desire it.

Let us, in love, help those around us beware of the teachings of anti-christs. Remember believers can be lead astray. It is the responsibility of each of us to care for one another, discipling and consequently fighting the attacks of false teachers, those who function as anti-christs.

*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.*

*When I feel afraid
think I've lost my way,
still You're there right beside me.
And nothing will I fear
as long as You are near.
Please be near me to the end.*

*I will not forget
Your love for me and yet
my heart forever is wandering.
Jesus be my guide
and hold me to Your side,
and I will love You to the end. ⁴*

⁴ Grant, Amy, and Michael W. Smith, Maranatha! Music Praise Chorus Book, 3rd Ed., "Thy Word," Marantha! Music, Laguna Hills, CA, 1993. #234.

The Epistles of John

“They’re Here!”

1 John 2:18-27

I	Introduction	
II	Many Anti-christs	Verses 18-19
III	One Truth	Verses 20-23
IV	Hold on to the Truth	Verses 24-25
V	Live in Your Anointing	Verses 26-27
VI	Conclusion	

I Introduction:
(Matthew 24:36)

II Many Anti-Christ: Verse 18:
(2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:2; Matthew 24:5, 24 see Acts 2:17; 2 Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20; Matthew 25:1-13)

Verse 19:

III One Truth: Verses 20-21:
(Acts 2:17; Matthew 10:16; Acts 17:11)

Verses 22-23:

IV Hold on to the Truth:
(John 20:31)

V Live in Your Anointing:
(Ephesians 4:12; 1 John 4:1)

VI Conclusion:
(1 Corinthians 13:28-31; Ephesians 4:14)

Personal Application: The more we understand God's word, the harder it is to lead us astray. Let's remember to spend time in God's word and dependent on His Spirit.

Prayer for the Week: Lord, keep me in Your word and Your precepts. In Jesus' name, amen.