

1 John 2:18-23

"The Last Hour & The Antichrist"

A sharing in the things of God, a relationship w/God is everything in the Christian life. It's imperative that we stay vigilant & be on guard against anything that might impair or poison that relationship. – John has been very careful to instruct us regarding things that can do just that. Last week he spoke to us through the incredible passage of scripture (Vs 15-17) warning us of the dangers of worldliness. How that worldliness can absolutely devastate & destroy our walk/relationship w/God.

In our present passage, he speaks on another matter that seeks to run interference on our relationship w/God (& tries to stand right in the way of others coming into a relationship w/God) & that is danger/deception of what we might call, "false religion" as opposed to a true relationship w/the Lord.

Vs 18-19

It's incredible to me, how many vital themes John threads throughout & topics he touches upon in this otherwise brief letter he wrote.

I suppose the 1st thing that pops out at us in *this* section of scripture is this phrase, "it is the last hour". Now, as you read through the observations/interpretations of various commentaries & such, different people have different ways of handling these 5 words. Some will point to the fact that scripturally, "the last days" began when Christ came to the earth the 1st time & won't end until He comes again the 2nd time. – As the author of Hebrews writes, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,"¹ The days of Adam weren't the last, they were the 1st. The days of Moses, or David or the prophets weren't the last. They all pointed *to* & would culminate *in* Christ, *His* days marked the "beginning of the end" (if you will).

Others see this phrase, "the last hour" as a theologically technical term denoting a period of time (whether long or short) that will usher in the termination of all time & the revelation of the final salvation promised by God... Still others see it as a "kind" of time rather than a "duration" of time. (As in the characteristics descriptive of the last days as found in 1 Timothy 4 being on the uprise & increase [both in sheer volume/quantity & intensity]).

& I suppose in some measure, all the above could be equally true. But let me just say this as well. * God (it seems to me) has planted deep w/in the heart of every believer (since the time of Christ forward) a constant expectation & unrelenting anticipation of the soon return of J.C.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Heb 1:1-2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

This looming, uncertain certainty that the Lord could return at any moment. Meaning I'm not certain if it'll be today, tomorrow, next year... I don't know when *exactly*, but I know w/absolute *certainty* that Jesus is coming soon...

When Jesus spoke to His disciples (of which John was in that circle) of His return, He spoke w/resounding certainty yet surrounded the event w/intentional ambiguity. He said, *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is."*² W/regard to the "what" He was resolute, "I'm coming again, it's going to happen." As for the "when"; He said, "No one knows, & that's just how the Father would have it to be."

Now He *did* consent to the fact that there would be *signs* (times & seasons, a.k.a. spiritual nuances, prophetic indicators) that we should recognize & that should alert us to realize that He stands at the door, He's at the edge of the precipice, His coming is close (kind of a thing). In fact, He rebuked the religious leaders of *His* day because their messianic radar was out of sync w/scripture. He said, *"When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times."*³ So, Jesus would have us to be aware of what's happening around us & what it means *to us* (prophetically speaking) that we might be prepared for His appearing. *

But as I mentioned, I believe that God has orchestrated this ambiguity, yet certain expectancy by design because it renders more than 1 helpful result in our lives. #1 It stirs w/in a sense of urgency. Time is short & we need to get this message out, that as many as possible might be saved! – You see, God knows that given the opportunity, we prefer to be lazy. We prefer to procrastinate, to put things off till the last possible second. God knows that if we truly believed there was plenty of time before the Lord's return, most of our hearts would fill w/apathy rather than urgency (regarding getting the gospel message into the hearts/ hearing of others).

#2. As for now, this anticipation/realization that Jesus could return at any moment encourages *purity* in our lives. How many of you want to be found drunk, or perusing pornography when the Lord returns? You want to be caught in some kind of sin? So, in realizing that Jesus could return at any moment, it purifies my life. I want to stay away from that kind of stuff... *

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mk 13:32-33]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mt 16:2-3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But if I thought Jesus wasn't coming any time soon, I might be a little more prone to dabble in the otherwise dangerous... Leave your finger here, turn to Matt's gospel 24 (Matthew 24:45-51).

I trust you're able to see the danger in defaulting to this position in your heart, "My Master delays His coming..."? It aids in relaxing our convictions, coaxing us to compromise. & Jesus says, "That's when you'll get caught w/your hand in the cookie jar & if you want to, you can play, but there's a price attached to that, that you *will* pay..."

Having said all of that, * I personally *truly* believe that the return of J.C. is incredibly close. At no other time in world history has the global climate been so ripe, so in line w/what the Bible describes as the conditions in/of the world just prior to the Lord's return. (You might write down & refresh your heart/mind later, Matt 24, 1 Timothy 4:1-3, 2 Timothy 3:1-9).

Not to mention there's no prophecy yet unfulfilled that would hinder Jesus from returning for His church... & I suppose that the Lord could put it off however long He deems appropriate. But He would have to recreate the global conditions as they are today because I'm telling you, the stage is set *prophetically* for rapture of the church. *Politically*, economically, the global community is ripe for the revelation of the A.C. the Great Tribulation upon the earth & the return of J.C. to establish His rule/reign over all the earth for 1,000 yrs to which we say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus!"

So, why hasn't He come? 2 Words, "Grace/mercy". How many of us would've missed the boat had the Lord raptured the church 10 yrs ago? 2 yrs ago? 25 yrs ago? *God's not slack concerning His promise, as come count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God wants as many people as possible to be saved. But just like w/Noah, the day will come when the door will be closed & His judgment will fall... **

Don't be deceived. If the Bible spoke w/resolute, unyielding accuracy of the 1st coming of Jesus, what would make us think it would be any less accurate concerning the prophecies of the 2nd coming of Jesus? & If John considered *his* time as the last hour... ladies & gentlemen, we should regard *our* time as the last few minutes...

& There's a real sense in which, even if the Lord doesn't return for His church for another 100 yrs, *your* days (& mine) are numbered, it's *our last days*, nonetheless.

"& as you've heard that the A.C. is coming, even now may antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour."

John calls to center stage this nefarious, infamous individual who's captured the imagination of people all over the world, including many who don't even know the Bible.

& Honestly most people don't know too much about this person whom John refers to as the A.C. outside of perhaps what they've learned in movies or something. (& Btw John's the *only one* in scripture who uses this term, yet it's become the definitive title for him, my guess is because it sounds so ominous).

But people think of this man & this image is conjured up in their minds of pure evil. He has a secret room in his house where he sits in the middle of a pentagram in the lotus position w/candles lit on each point of the star. All he thinks about is how he can serve Satan's evil agenda, how he can lead as many people to hell as possible, if you were to pull back the hair from his forehead, you'd find the numbers 666 etched in his skin... he's the Antichrist! The "opposite Jesus", Jesus is love, he's evil! Jesus is truth, he's deception... He's Antichrist... & This is how most people think when they envision the Antichrist.

But we need to understand something about this prefix "anti" in the original Greek language in which the N.T. was written. – Though it *can* mean "the opposite of", it can also mean "instead of". So, yes, the A.C. will ultimately be the opposite of Jesus, but initially you should think of him as the "instead of" Jesus.

People tend to fixate on the "opposite of" Jesus. So they think he's going to appear as this supremely evil person. Jesus went about doing good, he'll go about doing bad... The character/personality of Jesus was beautiful/attractive. The personality of the A.C. will be ugly/repulsive. But you should know, that emphasizes the idea of the "opposite of" Jesus too much.

He's not going to come storming onto the scene as the personification of evil. People will love this man, he'll look wonderful, he'll be charming, successful, a political, social, economic winner, he'll present himself (if you'll allow the term) as an "angel of light" & the world will hail him as the Messiah! If he were in the old spaghetti western, he'd be the cowboy wearing the *white* hat, not the *black* hat... He'll look like the good guy... He'll lead the world into a golden age... until he reveals his true colors & the judgment of God is poured out upon him & his empire just prior to the return of Jesus.

People often want to know. "Is he alive today? Is he out there on the scene somewhere on the earth?" I can't know for sure, but I tend to believe he is. As I said, the world is primed & ready for the rapture of the church & the 1st order of prophetic business after the rapture of the church is the revelation of the A.C. Now... does he *know* he's the A.C.? Probably not (though I don't know).

I would guess he's simply a successful man, consumed w/a vision who wants to change the world for good... Think about it, the book of Revelation gives us the # of his name, the number of a man: 666.

There's only 1 other man in scripture who's mentioned in connection w/the #666 & that man is... king Solomon. & I don't know if that's telling or not, but I will tell you that if you study the life of Solomon, if you learn nothing else, you'll learn that his is the sad story of a good man gone bad... & That *could be* the story of the A.C. Right now, perhaps he's simply a successful young man in business or maybe moving his way up the ranks in politics... But I don't think time is too far away for his revealing, which means you & I need to be ready to meet the Lord in the air... amen?

Ok. Jn makes a distinction for us here & we need to pay attention to it. He makes mention of a particular individual whom he refers to as *the A.C.* (This man, who will lead the world in a final, end times rebellion against God). – But then he also refers to many “antichrists” who have already come. In other words, though there will be an ultimate *fulfillment* in a single individual, there are many *foreshadowings*, little “previews” (if you will) along the way leading up to that point. Or to say it another way, there is a “spirit” of antichrist in the world. Providing variations, “other paths” that lead to salvation “instead of” Jesus.

* & John says that this is one of the *indicators* by which we know that it is the last hour. These other “gospels” (which aren't gospels at all) springing up, false teachings, other options that exclude Jesus. They're “antichrist”. There's a reason you can learn & speak openly of any # of eastern religions in the public schools, but bring up Jesus & you got problems... why is that? The “spirit of a.c.” is in the world...

But that shouldn't discourage or dishearten you, it should *encourage* you being a sign that the return of J.C. is imminent. Jn says, “Even now, many antichrists have come, by which we know it is the last hour. *

Vs 19

Where do these “antichrists” come from? John says, “Many of them at one time identified themselves w/the Christian community.” But the fact that they left the assembly demonstrates that even though they were *with* us, they never were truly *of* us or else they would've remained *with* us. – Think Acts 15. Paul & Barnabas before the Jerusalem council. They had been contending w/a group of men who claimed believing in Jesus was good, but if you were to be saved you had to be circumcised.

Paul said, “No, we’re saved by grace through faith.” The others were like, “No, you have to keep the law of Moses!” & It became a big deal. The short story is that Paul was right & the council made that clear... What then do you think became of those who disagreed w/them? – They went out *from* them, even though they had been w/them, but it became apparent that they were never truly *of* them.

✦ Family, one evidence of the life of Christ in a person is a desire to be w/& around the people of God. In 1 Jn Ch 3 we’ll read, “*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.*”⁴ When people share in the same divine nature, when they’re indwelt by the same Holy Spirit, they enjoy sharing fellowship w/one another! We like being together! Now, I’m not implying that *going to church saves you* or that *remaining in church keeps you saved*! Just that it’s one evidence that you truly are a believer in J.C. ✦

John isn’t saying that if someone leaves this church, but goes to another good church, then they aren’t really of us... He’s saying that if someone abandons the body of Christ altogether, then the odds are good that they never were part of the body of Christ to begin with...

Perhaps they were in the local assembly, there arose some controversy & someone responds by saying that they’re so sick of all this stuff, all the hypocrites (on & on they rant), “I don’t need any of this, I can follow God my own way!” & They don’t go to another good church & try to plug in, they just leave the body of Christ completely. Jn says, “That person (by all indications) was never truly a Christian to begin with.” Now, only God can know the heart w/certainty, but it would appear that perhaps they trusted in the church, maybe their own works, but not J.C. Because what Jn is telling us is that if they trust in Jesus, the common bond we share in Him would be greater than whatever difficulty they may be having w/other believers.

✦ Some people are so “spiritual”, so “in tune & in touch” w/God that they just can’t seem to get along in any church w/all the carnal Christians. They’re getting kicked out or leaving every assembly in a huff & it’s always someone else’s fault. They often determine it’s just better to not even be in a church because no one else is really on their level... Be careful of that one. If you love J.C. you’re going to want to be in/around the *body* of Christ. But a healthy body will purge toxins.

Our assembly should be so inviting, so warm w/the love of Jesus that anyone (regardless of how “sinful” they may be) feels welcome.

⁴ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Jn 3:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yet our desire to honor God & our study of His word should be so square on the head & serious that if someone doesn't desire to do the same, they can't stay too long. They either need to get right w/Jesus or find somewhere else to be because they can't play their games of trying to *look* like a Christian but having no real desire to *be* a Christian, here... They'll go out *from* us & it'll be made manifest that they weren't truly *of* us. *

Vs 20-23

Few things here briefly before we move to our close. Back in Vs 20, a more accurate reading would be rendered (& some of your Bibles may read this way), "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, & you all know..." Rather than, "you know all things." Now, I've met some of those believers who "know all things" (perhaps you have as well)! 😊 They can be very difficult to get along with!

But what Jn is saying here is that J.C. has given them the Holy Spirit (the anointing) which is common to all believers, & the Holy Spirit makes known to them that what he's sharing w/them is true. That's why he follows up by saying, "I've not written to you because you *don't* know the truth, but because you *do* know it." The Holy Spirit in your life makes it possible for you to discern the truth from the lie. To the Corinthians Paul put it like this, "*These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*"⁵ It's the Holy Spirit that enables a person to discern (to know) spiritual truth.

* & Let me say this, when the N.T. speaks of the "anointing", it's never referencing some special class of Christian that's been given a certain (almost magical) something that very few others ever receive. Nor is "the anointing" something that someone "comes under" or "catches" from someone else or makes people act weird.

Now, one may have a greater measure of *gifting* than another. But if you believe on the Lord J.C. The Holy Spirit has taken up residence in your life & you have an *anointing* from God! – Whether or not you're *submitted* or *responsive* to the anointing in your life may be another matter, but God has given it to you nonetheless. *

So John is pointing out that just because these people used to run w/the church that doesn't make the lies that they're spreading ok. "No lie is of the truth."

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Co 2:13-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

No word that leads people astray from J.C. & His role in our lives (as our Savior having lead a sinless life as God come in the flesh, dying on a cross for the sins of the world & rising from the dead 3 days later) is to be *received*, it's to be *rejected* completely & in totality!

Vs 22-23

We need to wrap up & wind down, but I want you to see this here. **Close.** To affirm J.C. means more than simply saying that He's the Messiah. It has to do w/understanding the relationship between Jesus (the Son) & God (the Father). To deny 1 is to deny the other. "He is antichrist who denies the Father & the Son." The Father & the Son are integrally & essentially bound together, they are 1. Remember, Jesus said, **"I and My Father are one."** John 10:30 Even as the Father is God, so is the Son. Jesus is fully God even as the Father is God, they are 1... If Jesus was just an ordinary man, a "good teacher", then His death on the cross doesn't mean nor accomplish much... But if He's the sinless, eternal God in human flesh, His sacrifice means everything & can atone for the sins of the world! ...

*** Who is Jesus? – Everything hinges upon your answer to that question. Whether or not we're truly family, your eternal destiny... everything.**

You'll often hear people say something to the effect of, "We all worship the same God, you have one name for Him, I have another, but we're talking about the same thing, the same God..." When someone says that to you, ask them this question: "Was your God perfectly revealed in the Person of J.C.?" Because the Bible says (Col 2:9) "... for in *Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*" The author of Hebrews referred to Jesus as the "...*express image* of His (the Father's) Person." In other words, if you want to know what God the Father is really like, study the life of J.C. Jesus revealed Him... (in all His grace, love, mercy, holiness, righteousness) perfectly. If your God wasn't perfectly revealed in Jesus, then we don't serve the same God... *

Some people have no problem w/God, but they don't believe in Jesus... It doesn't work that way. To honor & receive one is to honor & receive the other. The 2 are 1. You can't worship God, but leave Jesus out... So let's bow our hearts right now, acknowledge & affirm J.C. as our Lord & our God...

Prayer Points:

Lord we're both blessed & blown away that You would become flesh & not only dwell *among* us but lay down Your life *for* us... & We confess You openly, unashamedly as our Lord & our God. We worship You & praise You for You alone are worthy of all blessing & honor, power & glory forever & ever.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. You can be reconciled to God through faith in J.C. It's by grace that we're saved through faith. It's not about what you do, it's about trusting in Him & what He's done *for* you. Why put it off another day, turn from your sin & believe on J.C. today & be saved. Surely time is short, Jesus is coming soon, today is the day of salvation.