

The Sign of the Times

I John 2:18-27

Last week, we looked at our need to give up the things of this world in order to continue to develop in our spiritual maturity. We saw that there are things in this world that can consume our focus in life, thus become a threat to our faith in God. We can love this world so much that we find more pleasure in it than we do in God. And if our love for God is lacking then something else will come and live within us thus fueling passions and desires for what this world has to offer.

We saw that there are three areas in which we must stand guard. The lust for physical pleasure, the lust for what we see, and the pride in what we own or who we are. Adam and Eve were tempted in these three areas thus resulting in the origin of sin, yet Jesus was able to combat these temptations in the wilderness showing us that it is possible to find victory.

But John continued and told us to keep an eternal perspective. So often we look for the temporary fulfillment, while at the same time risking the eternal fulfillment we can find only if we remain faithful to God. Our success in our Christian walk is found in remaining Christ-centered and then making all of our choices and decisions based on what Jesus has done and what he continues to teach us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today, we will continue on in our study and look at **I John 2:18-27**. John not only wants to warn us about the dangers of this world but also about those who will come and try to lead us astray. Not only does he give us a warning, but then tells us how we can identify these anti-christ's.

There are five areas I want to look at this morning as we study through this portion of scripture.

1. John's warning to us. vs. 26

We have seen before that John wants to warn the church of things that would come and rip them off from the things of God. He was able to experience an incredible relationship with Jesus and doesn't want the church to miss out. In **verse 26** John says:

I have written to these things to you because you need to be aware of those who want to lead you astray.

In John's day there were those who were trying to trick or deceive those who were in the church.

Today, we find the Scriptures constantly be misinterpreted or misapplied thus creating another form of righteousness. Cults twist Scripture to make it say what they prefer.

John challenges us to guard the truth in our hearts otherwise we might be deceived and find ourselves calling evil good and good evil. As we looked at the book of Jude we found constant warnings of false teachers who would come and try to lead Christians astray. There is a warning all through Scripture about these teachers. If there is a warning to us, then obviously it is a serious problem that can ensnare us and trip us up.

I don't know why it is that God has me speaking on this topic again, especially after just talking about it in the book of Jude. Maybe he is preparing us. I don't know. But if it is mentioned in Scripture as often as it is, then it is worth saying it again.

False teachers can confuse us. They can manipulate our thoughts of God and the work of Christ. They turn the deification of God and Christ and minimize their work.

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science movement wrote a book in which she uses perfectly normal Christian sounding words, but behind each word she places an entirely different meaning. In fact, in order to explain those meanings, she writes a glossary of terms at the end of her book giving specialized meanings that depart from Christian doctrine.

It is so easy for us to become so confused. The Christian Book industry is filled with ideas and concept that are not only New Age, but takes the authority away from God and places in upon ourselves. Heed the warning!

There are people who want to lead you astray. They want you to get rid of your Christian walk and follow some manmade revelation or clarification of the Truth of God.

2. It's a sign of the times, vs. 18

In verse 18 John does tell us that this is a sign of the times. He says:

"Dear children, the (a) last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the end of the world has come."

We know that when Jesus came to earth and the Holy Spirit had come, we entered the "last days" and nobody but God knows how long the last days will last. In Acts 2:16-17 it says:

"In the last days, God said, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams."

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. Hebrews 1:1-2

God chose Jesus for this purpose long before the world began, but now in these final days, he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you. 1 Peter 1:20

Jesus also tells us of events that will happen in the last days. In **Mark 13:7-8** He tells us:

And wars will break out near and far, but don't panic. Yes, these things must come, but the end won't follow immediately. Nations and kingdoms will proclaim war against each other, and there will be earthquakes in many parts of the world, and famines. But all this will be only the beginning of the horrors to come.

But in **Mark 13:6** Jesus' words bring us to other characteristic of the last days that John wants to point out to us. It reads:

Many will come in my name, claiming to be the Messiah.

Then later in **Mark 13:22** Jesus tells us:

For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform the miraculous signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones.

Not only is the Anti-Christ coming, but antichrists are already here. There will be people who will rise up and call themselves the messiah. A Jewish Christian Scholar by the name of Dr. Charles Feinberg researched Jewish history and found that over 64 individuals had appeared to the Jewish people claiming to be the Messiah since the ascension of Jesus Christ. Today, there are cults that claim the same promise.

You know, the term antichrist is not only defined as one who is opposed to Christ, but also one who is the replacement for Christ. We definitely have a lot of those today.

3. The anti-christ's. vs. 19, 22-23

It is interesting to note where these antichrists will come from. In **1 John 2:19** John tells us:

These people left our churches because they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left us, it proved that they do not belong to us.

I think it is interesting that the antichrists will come out of the church. These people have somehow began with Christian doctrine and truth and then distort it. Jesus knew that his was going to happen. He even predicted this in **Matthew 13:24-30** in the parable of the wheat and tares:

Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in the field. But that night as everyone slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat. When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. The farmer's servant came and told him, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds!' "An enemy has done it!' the farmer exclaimed. 'Shall we pull out the weeds?' they asked. He replied, 'No, you'll hurt the wheat if you do. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds and burn them and to put the wheat in the barn. "'

Church there are people in the church who look just like us, they talk just like us, but they have been sent to lead others out of the church and away from their dependence on Jesus Christ. In the end they will be sorted out and will receive their due reward of judgement.

But for you and I today, we need to be on guard. There are many so-called movements in the Christian Church today that many Christians embrace, especially those who have very little knowledge of what God's word has to say. Beware, because they are not here for our good but for our destruction.

In **I John 2:22-23** John continues to talk about these antichrists and says:

And who is the great liar? The one who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Such people are antichrists, for they have denied the Father and the Son. Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father either. But anyone who confesses the Son has the Father also.

A dead give-away of an antichrist is that they deny the combination of the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ. They say that Jesus was not the Son of God or that he was simply another man.

There are many religions today that embrace Jesus in their teachings, but when it comes to his deity they respond that he is merely another man of good ideas, or that he wasn't human at all but a spirit. Or they redefine his work on the cross and his resurrection because they refuse to embrace the combination of Jesus' humanity and deity. The whole notion of the New Age movement sees Jesus as simply one of the many ways to God.

But according to John, not only Jesus' humanity and deity are inseparable but he is inseparable to God. You can get to the Father except through Jesus. In **II John 7** John tells us:

Many deceivers have gone out into the world. They do not believe that Jesus Christ came to earth in a real body. Such a person is a deceiver and an antichrist.

We are surrounded by antichrists who are not only other religions but people who may still be in the church. John's warning to us is not to get tangled up in their schemes. How can we make sure of this?

4. Do our part. vs. 24-25

In **I John 2:24-25** John tells us:

So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will continue to live in fellowship with the Son and the with the Father. And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us.

John tell us to remain faithful to what has been taught before. Not only does the Old Testament point to the focal point of all Scripture, Jesus Christ, but the apostles then give precise teaching about the truths of scripture. John tells us that we don't need anything more than that which is taught in the Bible.

We have all the truth we need right here in this book and in the teachings of the apostles. John does not want the church to go of and find something new. If they did then they could possibly fall into the trap of the antichrists.

John said in **I John 2:7**:

Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment, for it is an old one you have always had, right from the beginning. This commandment – to love one another - is the same message you heard before.

John doesn't add new revelation but simply teaches that which has been taught before. In **II John 9** John says:

For if you wander beyond the teaching of Christ, you will not have fellowship with God. But if you continue in the teaching of Christ, you will have fellowship with both the Father and the Son.

We live in a day where many churches have fallen into the trap of "new revelation". Yes, God does speak today, yet he never contradicts himself in relation to Scripture. The Bible is the standard and is our guard against any false doctrine that any antichrist may teach. The apostle Paul said in **Colossians 3:16**:

Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

God's words make us wise, they teach us and counsel us. The only way we can know God's words is to spend time in the Word. Spend time in the Word. Spend time in the Word. Paul wrote to the **Romans in 10:17**:

Faith comes from listening to this message of Good News – the Good News about Christ.

We can listen to God's word through teaching, or we can read it for ourselves.

But according to John there is something else that helps us to avoid the last day antichrists. God grants us power to overcome them.

5. God's power to overcome. vs. 20-21, 27

John tells us in **I John 2:20-21**:

But you are not like those who have left us, for the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and all of you who know the truth.

We have the Holy Spirit in us, who knows all truth, and either reminds us of what we have learned before, or brings emphasis to us when we read the truth of Scripture. In fact, in **verse 27** John tells us:

But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you all things, and what he teaches is true – it is not a lie. So continue in what he has taught you, and continue to live in Christ.

In the NIV it says that we have the "anointing" of the Holy Spirit. I have hear this word be misused by so many. This term anointing means that the Holy Spirit is living within a person. Jesus promised his church that he would send the Holy Spirit to them, to fill them and guide them, and remind them of what He had said.

John is not telling us in **verse 27** that we don't need teaching in our lives by the church or other individuals. He is simply saying that what ever we hear must be subjected to the Holy Spirit's discernment that lives within us.

I have said before that I believe a great term for the Holy Spirit is that of a "confirmer". We hear a lot of things everyday, yet it is the Holy Spirit who confirms if those thoughts or ideas are of God or not. **John 16:13** says:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

The Spirit, who Jesus sent is the Spirit of Truth. If we do our part and dig deep into what the Scriptures teach then the Spirit of Truth will then be able to remind us or even guide us in those truths, and you and I will be able to discern what he hear. If we don't read,