

The Last Eyewitness, V

Anti-Christ's (1 John 2:18-27)

November 2, 2003

THE LAST HOUR

John (the last surviving apostle) was about 80 when he wrote:

Dear children, this is the last hour ... – 1 John 2:18 NIV

The term: Last Hour is a simple expression for the time between when the Lord ascended to heaven and when He'll come again.

- No one can know how long this "hour" will end up being.

But there was this persistent rumor among the believers that Jesus was going to come back before John died. So, at the very end of his gospel, John tries to put this urban legend to rest.

When Peter saw [John], he asked, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." Because of this, the rumor spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" – John 21:20-23 NIV

Poor John ... he'd visit the churches around Ephesus and believers would get all excited, "He's checkin' out pretty soon!" They'd be praying for his health to deteriorate. "He said, 'If I want him to remain!'"

Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. – 1 John 2:18-21 NIV

Q: That word "antichrist" sure jumps out at ya, doesn't it?

Weird things can come to mind when we hear it ... "Antichrist".

Q: But what's he getting at? What exactly does he mean?

Q: Who is the real *antichrist* that John's referring to?

THE REAL ANTICHRIST

Bruce: I think it's time to "Tell the Truth!"

[An Ogre and a Scholar enter and stand at stage front]

Bruce: I am the antichrist as described by the Apostle John in his letter to the early Christian churches.

[The Ogre and the Scholar go to their microphones]

Bruce: Contestant #1, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

Ogre: Aarrg!

Bruce: Contestant #2, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

Scholar: Well, I believe he was a very good man.

Bruce: Yes, but was He the Son of God?

Scholar: I believe that he was a prophet.

Bruce: But was He the Christ; the Son of the living God?

Scholar: No. Jesus was not the Son of God.

Ogre: Aarrg?!

Bruce: Will the real Antichrist please step forward?

[After exchanging glances, the Scholar steps forward]

Bruce: Contestant #1, what is your name and what do you do?

Ogre: My name is Carl Nelson, and I am a male nurse.

Bruce: Thank you for playing, "To Tell the Truth!"

[The Ogre and the Scholar shake hands and exit]

JESUS + CHRIST

The only place the term "Antichrist" is found in the Bible is in John's letters. And he goes on to explain *exactly* what he means.

Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist — he denies the Father and the Son. — 1 John 2:22 NIV

- This isn't an apocalyptic figure it's a false teacher.

Q: Remember the two perversions that John was challenging?

1. The Ebionites who denied the deity of Jesus.
2. The Docetists who denied the humanity of Christ.

This is a direct attack against the Ebionites and anyone who rejects Jesus as God incarnate (or personified). A modern-day example would be the Jehovah's Witnesses.

- The term *Christ* means *the Anointed* or *the Messiah*.
- The word *Jesus* was a common name like *John* or *Joe*.

- The name "Jesus" refers to His humanness
- The name "Christ" refers to His holiness

So when we say, "Jesus Christ" we embrace and reaffirm our faith in His perfect blend of humanity and deity.

- The Docetists were anti-Jesus
- The Ebionites were anti-Christ

And these Antichrists had been a part of John's congregations.

They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us ... – 1 John 2:19 NIV

We're no different; I see people come and go here, who adopt some of the externals of the faith, but never really belong.

- Some come because it's family tradition ... or coercion!
- Some come because of the social and business contacts.
- Some come out of habit; never questioning why they do.

Coming to church can just make you feel good. There's love and laughter, and joy, and warmth and acceptance. But if your reason for being a Christian or going to church isn't completely Christ-centered ... you don't really belong. We want you to belong! But the hard truth is that:

- If we don't bow to the truth we automatically embrace a lie

The false doctrine of the Ebionites was attractive to the Jews because if they downplayed the deity of Christ they could remain in the synagogue. It's no different for us. If downplay the deity of Jesus in our lives because we think we can keep a foot in both worlds.

But John is pleading with his people to examine themselves:

... you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. – 1 John 2:18-21 NIV

Q: We're never seduced by an Antichrist spirit, are we?

Q: Ever think you're sliding sinful behavior under His radar?

If He was just Jesus-the-moral-teacher we could get away with that. But He is Jesus the Christ (the divine authority).

Q: Ever find yourself trying to earn God's love, acceptance, or forgiveness by revving-up your spiritual activities?

If He was just Jesus-the-law-giver we'd be bound by legalism. But He is Jesus the Christ (the very means of God's grace).

Q: Ever feel like God is distant and angry?

If He was just Jesus-the-dead-guy we'd have every right; but He is Jesus the Christ (who died and rose to reunite us with our devoted Creator and Father).

Because Jesus is the manifestation of God, to deny His *Christness* is to reject the Father's way of revealing Himself to us.

No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us — even eternal life. — 1 John 2:23-25 NIV

“Eternal life” isn't just about a rewarding here-after. The promise of life through Christ is a transformed here-and-now.

Q: Does your lifestyle reveal that Jesus is the Christ?

I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit — just as it has taught you, remain in him. — 1 John 2:26-27 NIV

A couple last things here:

1. The anointing is a reference to an OT practice of setting apart priests and priestly objects with anointing oil.
2. The line: You do not need anyone to teach you can be taken so out of context by those who desire no accountability.

Teaching is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If John literally meant that his readers needed no instruction, he wouldn't be writing this letter.

He's referring to, "those who are trying to lead you astray". He's saying, "You don't need anyone of them to teach you."

- Don't be fooled ... don't be led astray.

You have been anointed by His Spirit – set apart for the purpose and pleasure of a loving Father who has chosen to reveal Himself fully through His Son, Jesus the Christ.

- Remain in Him.