

1 John 2:17-23 (NKJV)

17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

Let's take a brief review to remind ourselves where we are in our passage.

This book is telling us how to have **joy**. Up until now we have been looking at things that **rob us** of fellowship with God.

The tests of obeying God and loving our brothers were also focused on. They showed us those things that **provide** fellowship and **rob us** of fellowship.

Then John diverted into an encouraging poem that would help us to see what we have in Christ.

Then right after that he directed us into probably one of the hardest prohibitions in all scripture. We are commanded not to love the things of the world. We looked at that and saw that the world is **humanity in rebellion against God**. Remember what we saw in Isaiah. There was the worship of **God** and **anything else**. The love of the world is the "**anything else**"

That brings us to this morning.

Before we go forward I wanted us to take a look at verse 17. This fit better into the discussion of not loving the world, but I felt like we had not done business with it and I think we should.

17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Here we find more encouragement that we are barking up the right tree when we define the love of the world as that which is outside the worship of God.

This evil worldliness, this attitude of living and deciding independently of God, is going to end. And the appeal of that **mode of living**, that **inordinate desire**, that **lust**, will be ending with it.

What wonderful news that is. Do you struggle with strong desires that tend toward evil failures in your walk with God? Praise God they will end one day. How will all evil lusts in rebellion against God be done away with forever? How can there be no longer any possibility of such a thing in eternity? Maybe on that day God will actually take away the **possibility to decide to sin** in His people. There is a sense that this would rob us of the **freedom of choice**. If so, I say bring it on. I have not done all that well with the freedom to choose so far. If this is to be a final choice, the choice to give up that freedom so that I would never dishonor God again, I would gladly make it. I think all Christians would. I would gladly say, Lord, if you want to limit my **ability to choose**, so that it is impossible for me to **ever choose sin again**, please Lord, do so.

This is similar to the servants in the Old Testament that were so confident of their employers that they voluntarily gave themselves over as slaves to that master by having a hole punched in their ear.

Adam and Eve were given the ability to decide. I think God created it that way because God wanted a people who would **willingly** bend their will to God's will, who would worship Him by choice. And we see the result in the world around us. We see those few, by percentage, that God has called to Himself who consider it a great honor to live for God, no matter what the cost. They have made their choice. So eternity will not be full of those who are **not glad to be there**. Should it be hard to imagine that we would **welcome the loss of our option of deciding against God**? Even **that** could be a choice we would all be glad to make in order to end, once and for all, the very opportunity of sin to mess up our lives one more time.

This evil world in rebellion against God is passing away, and all of its evil lusts. Praise God. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Now in context there is likely **another reason** the world's passing was emphasized. It is to emphasize the **foolishness** of loving the world.

If you were looking for a car to last you the next 10 years, which would you choose if you had the choice? A new car with a reputation for high mileage? Or a very fancy car with 300,000 miles on it? That choice is easy. You want the one that lasts the longest.

Ok when you suddenly face a difficult circumstance in your life, which do you want? Do you want a faithful decision that will last as a treasure in heaven forever? Or do you want to respond faithlessly, living for the moment,

following your impulses and emotions, like the rest of the world and be left with nothing that lasts at all.

Worldly **choices** are always rip offs. Worldly **responses** are always rip offs. They rob us of reward and they leave us with nothing but regret.

We are designed to live for **that which lasts**. Faith looks past the temporary pleasure now to the reward of eternity. We find that from the beginning of the Bible to its end.

Now it is important to see here what kind of person it is that is not loving the world. Look at the definition of who lives forever.

but he who does the will of God abides forever.

It is not he who **likes** the will of God abides forever. It isn't he who **teaches** it.

It isn't he who **quotes** it. It isn't he who **defends** it. It is he who **lives** it.

It is impossible to maintain the idea of a salvation from the Bible that does not change a person into the conformity of the Savior's will. If you don't look more like Jesus in this season of your life than you did when you responded to the message of salvation, it is very likely that you were never saved.

We need to cling to that idea and never move from it. The salvation of God is accompanied with the **power to change our lives** to the **conformity of His will**.

If that power is not displayed, that faith is dead. It is no faith at all.

OK now let's move on.

18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

..... **22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.**

OK, in order to understand this we must understand two things.

What is the last hour?

And what is an AntiChrist?

Let's start with the last hour. What is it.

Based on its use in scripture we get the idea that it is a **kind** of time rather than a **duration** of time.

1 Timothy 4:1-16 (NKJV)

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

Then this passage goes on to teach Timothy how to deal with these current people, as if to say we **are** in the last times and we **were warned** this would come.

2 Peter 3:3-9 (NKJV)

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,

4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation."

5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,

6 by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water.

7 But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

This passage talks about the scoffers that are present when Peter talks about them. They are **already** in the last days. It is not something to come but something that is already. The day of judgment is coming. That is a future event. But we are already in the last days.

With these and other scriptures we conclude that the **last days** are the days from Christ's resurrection to when Christ returns. We are in the last days. Now evil will escalate. It has ebbed and flowed in world history with God giving reprieves from time to time. But evil will escalate at the end of time. The same is true of anti-Christ.

What is an antichrist?

Well the Greek words combined to make this word explain what it is. It is **against Christ**. And the Devil is the ultimate **against Christ** force. He has always been the driving force behind all those who stand against the person and work of Christ. The devil is the ultimate Anti-Christ.

John is the only one who uses the term antichrist, but the concept exists lots of places in Daniel and the New Testament.

[Dan. 7:7f;](#) [9:26-27;](#) [11:36-39;](#) [Matt. 24:15;](#) [Mark 13:6;](#) [2 Thess. 2:3, 8;](#) [Rev. 11:7;](#) [13:1-10, 18;](#) [17:1-18](#)

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1-3 John.

We see what appears to be a person who leads the world in rebellion against God and severely persecutes the church. Your view of end time scriptures would determine whether you think this is a person or a force. But for sure it is bad.

John's passage would indicate to me that he is speaking of an individual.

18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

OK,

John starts with calling these folks little children. It looks like John is pouring out his pastoral heart on these people. He wants to **protect** them. He wants to **prepare** them. He wants to **warn** them, much like we want to protect little children. There is no sense getting too uppity in our lives. The truth is we all act like little children at times from God's perspective. We act like sheep too and that is even worse. We need **protecting**. We need **warning**. And we should never be too hard on the people who are trying to do that, even when it offends our pride.

Now let's put ourselves in these people's shoes. Here they are, probably a bit isolated. They only know what they hear from travelling ministers and from the Old Testament. Then they have people who are coming to them teaching things about Christ that are different than John taught and different than other ministers taught. But they seemed to be card carrying members of the **pro Christ club** at some point. What were they to think? How would they react? I really liked what Martyn Lloyd Jones said here.

He said, **It seems to me that there is nothing, in a sense, which so thoroughly tests our knowledge of the New Testament Scripture, indeed of the whole Bible, there is nothing which so certainly tests our faith as our reaction to the situation in which we find ourselves. If we are given to panic or a sense of despair, it is because we have not read our scriptures truly, for the Bible is literally full of warnings of the very kind of thing which we are experiencing.**

He was applying it to responding to the emergency of false teachers, but it is true of everything we face.

We need to understand, you and I as we sit and stand here this morning, that we are in warfare. If we are not **aware of it**, we are probably **losing ground**. This life is a battlefield for us as Christians. And the war is waged thought by

thought, belief by belief, word by word, action by action. We are dealing with little antichrists coming from the power behind antichrist. We cannot be surprised to find this counter influence working in every one we know. Some have **given themselves over** to it. Some are doing a **bad job at resisting it**. And some are **heavily into the fight** every day. Which are we?

It is clear that John believes he is in the last hour. And so are we. Does it seem like a long hour? Well it is not from where God sits. The end is just about to come. That was true for John in His day and it is true of us in our day. And if the world lasts another thousand years, it will be true in all of those days as well.

Now, the teaching that John is referring to seems to be an understanding, maybe from Daniel or Jesus or Paul's teachings. They seem to be expecting a single individual who will be the embodiment of everything Anti Christ. They are expecting his arrival and his destruction. This is not a new concept to them. But what John tells them **now** might be.

even now many antichrists have come,

So John is letting us know that the final antichrist is not all alone in his ministry of destruction. He has precursors who are carrying out his strategy. They just do not have the final power and opportunity that **he** will have. If they did have that ability, they would do the same things.

Now who are these antichrists? What do they look like? How will we know them?

Fortunately John isn't silent about that. He fills us in with what we need to know.

In verses 19,20 and 27 we learn these things about these antichrists

They went out from us but they were not of us

They teach lies in their doctrine about Christ

Which would you prefer facing? A frigid blizzard that you must go out into? Or a cancer cell coming to life in your body?

The blizzard poses a danger we can see and understand. There are things we can do to guard against that which we know will harm us. We can prepare ourselves to meet it.

But the cancer cell is more difficult to prepare for. We don't expect it. We are shocked to find out about its presence. And getting rid of it, if possible, will be personally costly.

The Nietzsche's and Sagan's of the world will do far less harm to the church than the wolves in sheep's clothing who intend to feed on the sheep. The

enemy **within the camp** is always capable of causing more damage than the **enemy without**.

So these antichrist wanna be's are particularly dangerous. They were inside. They were watching and listening. They know our weaknesses and vulnerabilities. They know how to exploit them. And they have gained our trust. Their doctrines can be **so close to the truth** so that they seem believable. But **far enough from the truth** that no one can be saved by them, even though they will keep trying to do so.

And they will wreak of the devil in their pretense to know more about **real life** and **real truth** than the humble servants of God have presented to us. They will have **higher** truths. They will pose themselves as being smarter and more caring. And lest we think that their doctrines are original, they never are. They are doctrines that demons have whispered into their ears or their hearts. That is how scripture defines their teachings. Doctrines of demons. So these antichrists were on the inside and looked like the real thing. They gained credibility and influence that they could have never gained on their own.

But they do not **stay** on the inside. Why? Well for one thing any self respecting elder will not allow them to remain once they become aware of the false doctrine. The false teacher should be given the opportunity to repent. But if they will not repent, they need to be disciplined. They must be removed from the body and the body must know why for their own protection.

Why else?

Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts

Acts 20:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Sometimes the false teachers leave so they can get the followers out from the safe shepherding so they can fully exploit them. They cannot build their kingdom as long as a good shepherd keeps intruding.

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

Look at this. If they were **OF** us, they would have continued **WITH** us.

There are good reasons to leave a bad church, a church that isn't really a church.

There are also good reasons to leave a good church, when it is for a higher good.

But when people leave a good church for doctrinal disputes, and the doctrine at the church they are leaving is good doctrine, and they leave because they want to have influence, watch out. That is what this passage describes as antichrists. These teachers **must** leave a good church. They cannot carry out their agenda within its realm. And in their **leaving**, and for the **reasons that they are leaving**, they show themselves to be outside the bonds of Christian love in the church of Christ. Love cannot cover the differences, and they do not **want** love to cover the differences. They want the freedom to **represent Christ** and to **be against Christ** at the same time. And no, that is not what their t-shirts or business cards will say. But if you listen and watch and challenge them, that is what you will find out. They cannot stand up to scrutiny.

This passage also shows us the importance of church involvement and inclusion. The lack of it does not prove these people are introverts and don't like crowds. It does not give the impression that church involvement is **an option** that we can **choose** or **not choose**. No. The significance of removing oneself from involvement in church is, in this case, an indication of being an unbeliever. Being part of a church, with a dependency **upon it**, and a full contribution of one's self **to it**, is a sign that a person truly belongs to that family. And that family is part and parcel of that person's life. To leave it would be incongruent to who they really are. The only ones who would leave it must not be part of what it is all about. That is the assumption in the passage.

Notice too that these antichrist influences will always wear the masquerade of true spirituality. They will preach themselves to be the most truth loving, the most Christ like, the most concerned about the listeners. But they are **liars**. And what is the primary indicator of an antichrist?

..... ²² **Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.**

The problem is the doctrine.

Church people can have a lot of wacky views about a lot of things. They can disagree on all kinds of things that scripture says. They can even have a heated argument on the nature of the antichrist and what he represents in the Bible. God seems to have built some of that into scripture, since no one knows conclusively what lots of it means. So **love** is called for to **love people** that we disagree with. And that is a wonderful thing. It guarantees diversity in the body.

But there are a few core doctrines that cannot be disputed. And chief in those doctrines is the fact that **Jesus is the Christ**. This is part and parcel of the

salvation message of the Bible. Without Jesus being the Christ, there is no means of salvation. And invariably, this is what the false teachers will tamper with. They must. Because their father, the devil, cannot abide the true Gospel being presented. He cannot stand for Christ to be glorified and for people to come to Christ. When the gospel is **presented clearly**, people can be saved for all time and eternity. If the gospel is **tampered with**, it loses its ability to save. And that is what the devil wants. He would like nothing better than to fill churches with religious people who think that they will be saved apart from the blood of Christ. And that is what false teachers are doing all across the world this morning.

Some people might accuse us of being **liberal** because we tolerate most sincerely held beliefs that arise from reading and believing the Bible, even when those views **vary wildly** from the norm or what others of us believe. And I hope we remain that way, no matter who might not like it.

But I also hope that we always **understand** and **defend** the gospel message and would die rather than to give an inch of **what real salvation is** and **how it grows**.

All of the cults tamper with the core of the gospel. If you press them far enough, and it is hard to do because they have been taught to use our words but change the definitions, you will find that it takes something more than a simple faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ on the cross to save you. You can usually find out what that extra thing is by asking them, **why do I need to join your group** if I can be saved by Christ alone? And if I can be saved by Christ alone, why can't I join another group that believes they can be saved by Christ alone. You will soon hear why Christ isn't really enough to save you. They have the secret recipe that you need.

Sometimes I interpret our failure at winning people to the Lord as an indication that there is something wrong with us. There may be a reason that the Lord is not blessing us with new believers. And that could be true. But this passage has been encouraging for me and I hope it will be for all of us. God's true church is based on a fellowship that is formed on solid doctrine. I know that, be it ever so humble, we guard the gospel of Christ. And I believe that our fellowship is based on it. And I believe that there is no person who would remain here if we started preaching some other gospel. And that is very good. Some of the churches the epistles were written to were struggling with this issue.

At the end of the day we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And the sin debt that **we had, He took** upon Himself and died on the cross at God's hand, facing God's wrath for our sin. And that by **faith in Him** we receive the salvation He has to offer with all the resurrection power we need to live a new life. We are free from sin's power and empowered by our new life to live for Christ. And that is what the result is in someone who has truly experienced this salvation.