

5/14/26 1 Jn. 2:18-29 The Last Hour

(1 Jn. 2:18-19) 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. 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.

First, just in case anyone finds it strange that something which was happening 2000 years ago would be labeled 'the last hour'. This isn't the only place the Church Age is referred to as things like 'the ends of the ages' in 1 Cor. 10:11 or 'the last days' in 2 Tim. 3:1.

The promised (and long awaited) kingdom of the Messiah on earth could have been established near 30 A.D. if Israel had received, instead of rejected, their King. So, the intended timeline would have gone from Malachai to the coming of Christ to first teach the conditions of the Kingdom and then establish it.

But knowing that this would happen, God had planned, *before* the foundation of the world, to have an age that would not be part of His purpose and plan for Israel. It would be a time when something completely unique would be done; a spiritual kingdom would be formed and inhabited by a new race of people that, through the new birth, would become the members of that spiritual humanity.

Here's the best explanation I could find to help clarify this;

There was marked out by God a period, a dispensation, in this world's history when God would not be doing something as belonging to this present world or related to this present earth. Up till that time it was otherwise. He was dealing with the nations in relation to a nation among them (Israel). That nation was His chief concern, and everything was of an earthly order, finding God intervening swiftly and along temporal lines in the affairs of that nation. Then a future time will come when He will have something on the earth again- a kingdom of this world. But between these two economies there is this special one in which God's object is to take *out of* the nations a people for His Name, a people of a heavenly birth, a heavenly life, a heavenly

sustenance, a heavenly vocation, a heavenly warfare, and a heavenly consummation. Thus, in this present age, God is *not* occupied with this earth and the setting up of something here. The deepest reality of the Church is that it is not of this world or fixed to this earth. Now the whole tendency of man is to set up and have something here; to see, handle, run, establish, organize, constitute, and build, as on this earth. This has been the one most positive cause of loss of spiritual power and effectiveness.

The Church Age is like a parenthesis in the history and timeline of Israel. When the Messiah was “cut off” (as Daniel put it), Israel was set aside and the final Age of God’s eternal purpose *prior to* the establishment of the 1000-year Messianic Kingdom was begun – the Age of the Church.

We are near the end of that Age and when the Church is removed, the clock will begin again on Israel and run for seven years after which Christ will return and set up the Millennial kingdom with Israel as the ruling nation of the world.

(Rom. 11:1, 25-27) I say then, has God cast away His people? . . . I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel *until* the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And then all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

“The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

Following Israel’s rejection of her King, their kingdom was postponed until the “last hour” or “the ends of the ages” ran its course. Once the Church is completed by the “fullness of the Gentiles” being brought in and by the Church reaching the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13), the Church will be removed and Israel will again become God’s focus as He prepares them for the coming of their Messiah to destroy their enemies and inaugurate their kingdom.

Israel’s setting aside is temporary, not permanent, regardless of what you hear from false teachers about the Church *replacing* Israel. The Bible is full of verses,

both Old Testament and New Testament, confirming God's unconditional promises that this kingdom of Christ will happen.

So, don't buy into what's called "Replacement Theology"; it's just another of many false teachings floating around today designed by the enemy to create antisemitism and to blur the distinction between the Church as a heavenly kingdom and Israel as an earthly kingdom. Two different kingdoms; two different callings and purposes, and both will be accomplished in their time.

Ok, back to our verse in 1st. John. After reminding his readers that the Church Age is the "last hour" of human history before the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, John introduces the problem of the growing accumulation of "antichrists" that will seek to redefine both what the Church is as well as what its purpose is in expressing, through union with Christ, the Lord's indwelling life to the world around us.

The Church is Christ corporately expressed. It is a many-membered spiritual body (as we saw when we studied 1 Cor. 12); it is not an earthly kingdom. Creating confusion and distortion about the identity and purpose of the Church is one of the theological attacks of the "many antichrists (which) have come". John points out that *the* Antichrist will eventually rise to deceive and control all nations, but before he does, there will be "many antichrists" paving his way during this "last hour" we are living in. John's goal is that we are aware of this and that we are able to identify, expose and avoid being drawn into what they are presenting to us.

Now, in vs. 19, we read this:

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.

You probably remember Paul's warning to the elders of the Church at Ephesus in Acts 20:28-31;

Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves

will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

John was facing a similar situation. In his case it appears it was the “from among yourselves” crowd, rather than the “wolves coming in” group. John’s wording is “they went out *from us* . . .”

There’s debate in different commentaries as to whether these men that “went out” were Christians or not. Some of that confusion centers around what John meant by “of us”. Is he talking about members of the body of Christ who bought into the false teaching that was becoming popular in that generation, or is he referring to Satan’s “angels of light” emissaries?

Either way, whether saved or unsaved, the main point John is making is that they were “dangerous”; John’s concern is the influence they could have on his readers.

Another place this came up was in Acts 15:1-2;

Certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” Therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them.

And in Acts 15:24 we see this;

Since we have heard that some who *went out from us* have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law . . . “

The phrase, “went out from us” is identical to the phrase John used in 1st Jn. 2:19. The impression we get by both is that these false teachers had been with the Church members for some time and then eventually, as John shows in vs. 19, “They were made manifest”. What they were now teaching revealed that they had only pretended to be part of the apostolic tradition of sound doctrine, then at

some point they deviated and the content of their teaching made it clear that they were not in line with the teaching of John and the other apostles.

In vs's 20-23 John gets specific about what these pretenders were teaching;

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and that no lie (no falsehood) is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

So, at that time in history, what was being spread was the denial of who the Son of God really is. The work, the sacrifice, and the identity of Jesus of Nazareth seems like at the center of all false teaching (regardless of what generation people are living in).

(Matt. 16:13-17) When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So, they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

You'll notice Jesus makes it clear that no one can know the truth of Who He is apart from supernatural revelation; no one can "figure it out" with their intellect no matter how much study and research they put into it.

(1 Cor. 2:14) 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.

This is true about literally everything in the scriptures. We may be able to understand some of the obvious things we read, like the moral instructions, or the historical events and their significance. But there are meanings of every principle

in the Bible that are *only* accessed by spiritual revelation, including knowing Christ as He really is. Listen to this explanation by Sparks;

As we contemplate the state of things in the world today, we are very deeply impressed with the prevailing malady of spiritual blindness. It is the root malady of the time. We should not be far wrong if we said that most, if not all, of the troubles from which the world is suffering, are traceable to that root, namely, blindness. The masses are blind; there is no doubt about that. In a day which is supposed to be a day of unequalled enlightenment, the masses are deceived. The leaders are also blind, blind leaders of the blind. But in a very large measure, the same is true of the Lord's people. Speaking quite generally, Christians today are very blind.

Every bit of new spiritual seeing in God's word is a work from heaven. Spiritual Life and understanding are not only a miracle in its inception; they are a continuous miracle in this matter right on to the last. We do not say or suggest that you may have anything extra to the Word of God, but we do claim that there is a vast amount *in* the Word of God that we have never seen or understood. Surely everybody agrees with that: and it is just that – to see, and the more you see, I mean really see, the more overwhelmed you feel about the whole thing, because you know that you have come to the borders of the land of far distances, lying beyond a short lifetime's power of experience. May the Lord allow us all to be among those whose eyes have been opened.

It's the pride of man thinking that he can contribute to his understanding of the things of God by disciplining his mind and putting in the time and effort needed to be thorough.

No one can know the Truth as it is in Christ apart from prayer. And since God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble, God will *only* reveal the essential truths of the Bible to those who are willing to admit their own *inability* to know the Word of God apart from direct, supernatural revelation of the Spirit Who alone can lead us unto all truth.

And this is just as true in regard to the Person of Christ as it is to anything else we see in the scriptures. Who do men say that He is? There are million opinions, but only one true answer to that question.

Like our Lord warned in Matt. 24, this generation will be filled with alternate Christs and millions of Christians will receive “another Jesus”, “another spirit” and “another gospel”;

(2 Cor. 11:3-4) I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

Our lives are meant to be spiritual, supernatural, and fully dependent on the Lord for literally everything, not the least of which is our knowledge of the Lord and the Bible. Until we really understand why it has to be that way and are living with that mindset, we are vulnerable to deception.

This is something the enemy has been doing from day one. He never stops offering us reasonable alternatives to the truth, whether in doctrine or in our perception of the Jesus we worship, and we desperately need the Holy Spirit to show us the truth, the meaning, behind what we are reading or hearing.

As I’ve often quoted before by Vance Havner;

The devil is not fighting religion; he's too smart for that. He is producing a counterfeit Christianity so much like the real one that good Christians are afraid to speak out against it.

John was not afraid to speak out against it; and neither should we be. It’s not just for our own sake or for the sake of those who might be taken in by a counterfeit; it’s a willingness on our part to defend the honor and the testimony of the true Christ.

In the next section of his letter, John reinforces the spiritual nature of God's Word in his attempt to give his readers some degree of confidence in overcoming the attempts of the enemy to deceive them.

(1 Jn. 2:24-26) Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.

We really need to hold on to what John is telling us in these verses, because it's the bottom-line defense against deception; "Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning."

The only way we can establish a solid defensive position in our soul against deception is, as often as needed, to bring to remembrance the foundational truths we were taught by men who knew and communicated the teaching of apostles. In the beginning there was apostolic authority and doctrine which John is exhorting his readers to never minimize or forget.

I did a study a couple years ago that I called "The Essentials of our Faith". It doesn't cover all the essentials that we could consider, but it targets those that are going to affect the way we think about salvation, about this life we've been brought into and especially about the grace of God that governs the Age we're living in. I'll attach the transcript of that study to the email when I send out tonight's study for anyone interested in reviewing it.

The reason John makes "the beginning" so important is because it was the time of our initial encounter with Christ and it established what our Lord calls our "first love" in Rev. 2:4; it was a love that was undefiled and focused exclusively on Christ. With all that we may have learned since that time, the Lord warned that we must never lose our "first love" if we want to keep our testimony, our lampstand, shining. Since John's whole letter is founded on the principles of "abiding" and "fellowship", you can see why the way we entered into that fellowship (whether we understood it at the time or not) was through childlike faith in the grace of God.

(Col. 2:6-7) Therefore, *in the same way you received* Christ Jesus as Lord, *continue to walk* in Him, rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

In the beginning, when our fellowship with the Lord began, it was faith in Him that opened the door and invited Him in – John’s letter (and Paul’s comments in Col. 2) are telling us that simple and pure relationship with Him is the way we are meant to walk, to live out our lives as His children; it’s faith attaching itself to grace every day and trusting the Lord with the outcome.

That’s what 1 Jn. 1 was all about, and 1 Jn. 2 is when John begins to detail the ways in which that initial relationship could be damaged over time by deviating from the apostolic doctrines and guidance we initially received. Satan uses deception to sidetrack us from simple and pure devotion to Christ.

So, John wrote: “These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.” That’s John’s own explanation of *why* he wrote this letter to us.

And Satan has never, and will never, stop chipping away at the essentials of our faith and the simplicity of our walk with the Lord. He has an infinite number of devices or schemes to offer us designed to move us off the path we need to be on in order to minimize or even eliminate our continued “abiding with the Father and with His Son”.

Next, John wrote something that has caused some degree of confusion among authors trying to decide what he meant by this – vs 27;

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Of course, the “anointing” is the Holy Spirit. He’s the One Jesus said would come after He left and would “guide us into all truth”. He indwells all believers; He “abides” in us forever, and it’s the Spirit that reveals the meaning of the scriptures to us.

(John 16:7, 12-14) It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. . . I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

And as John said, besides opening our understanding so we can know the meaning of what we read in the scriptures, He will also “tell you of things to come” – as He did with the Book of Revelation and in other prophetic writings.

The confusion comes in with the statement, “You do not need that anyone teach you.” We *do* need that someone teach us. The Holy Spirit Himself made that clear in numerous passages; here’s a couple of them;

(Eph. 4:11-12) He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints.

Without the instruction of the gifted men cited in that passage, we’d never be equipped; we’d never grow up spiritually.

This is even stronger in 2 Pet. 3:16. Peter is talking about Paul’s epistles and he wrote;

As also in all (Paul’s) epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

There is a word in this passage that is often overlooked, but which is essential in understanding how we grow in the knowledge of God’s Word. It’s the word translated “untaught” (Amathes in the Greek) and it means “. . . to receive instruction under authority.”

(Heb. 13:7, 17) Remember those who rule (lit. exercise spiritual authority) over you, who have *taught* the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. . . Obey those who rule over you,

and submit (to their instruction), for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.

This is a pattern the Lord established in the first century and has been ensuring its continuance since that time. In his exhortation to Timothy, Paul wrote this;

The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, teach these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

It just keeps going from generation to generation, ensuring that what the Spirit revealed to the first century apostles would not be lost over time.

We won't take time now, but there are many more passages that deal with the importance of being taught by those called and gifted to teach, and it's important to know that this is the way God arranged things to ensure the spiritual growth of His saints. This 'arrangement' by the Lord to take Christians from infancy to maturity through the instruction of God's Word by gifted teachers cancels the belief of those who say "All I need is a good devotional book and a quiet evening; and I'll be fine." Those people come under the category Peter described as "people who are twisting (the Word) to their own (spiritual) destruction. . . "

We either do this God's way or we end up "untaught" and "unstable".

So, with all that mind, why did John say, "You do not need that anyone teach you?"

A statement like that would never be considered accurate if it was simply stated as a general principle for the Church. It would contradict too many other passages. But in 1 Jn. 2, it's essential, because the whole context is addressing the dangers of believers attaching themselves to false teachers.

Even in the best of situations, no matter who is teaching us, our dependency must never be on the human instrument God is using to teach us; but only on the Holy Spirit Who is the only safe Source of our knowledge and growth.

Commentators have taken different approaches to this. Here's an example from Zane Hodges;

The fact that they need no human teacher is of course a mark of their maturity, and this maturity had already been implied elsewhere in John's letter. Naturally more mature believers do not need the teaching brought by the antichrists, although these deceivers in all probability claimed that they did. Given the charismatic personality which false teachers often possess, they may well have made an impact on the congregations. The highly commendatory words of the apostle here would certainly be a powerful antidote to the scornful treatment the Antichrists probably exhibited toward the local leaders who resisted them.

I still lean to what I thought when I first read the passage we're looking at. We never become so mature that we no longer need gifted teachers more mature than us to take us further. But we do know that our faith needs to be attached *exclusively* to the Holy Spirit and not to any man, which is John's point.

And there is no way to overstate the importance of keeping this relationship with the Lord extremely personal. Our whole life and walk as a Christian depends on abiding in Christ in an intimate one-on-one relationship between Savior and saint. He is our 24/7 conversation. From every angle John could think of, he's warning us to not let anything or anyone disrupt the simplicity and the wonder of spending this life in fellowship with our Lord.

As we abide in Him, we learn, we listen, we experience His training, and we grow in our knowledge of Him. Nothing is more important than that. Growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is the way we are conformed to His image.

(2 Cor. 3:18) We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror (referring to the Word of God) we see the glory of the Lord, and are being transformed into that same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now, the closing verses in 1 Jn. 2 are vs's 28-29;

And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that

He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Before we look at the “ashamed” warning, I want to make sure we understand two things that are connected to this; first, God’s righteousness, like His essential Life, is not just the perfection of the best of man’s righteousness. Probably the biggest mistake people make in this issue of living righteously is assuming that a person who “practices righteousness” is someone who is doing the things that are morally correct – that they have considered WWJD in this situation, and then they did that to the best of their ability. It’s very subtle, but what I just described remains in the world of imitation rather than replication.

The righteousness John is talking about is that which only God is, and which only He can do. It has a spiritual, as well as a moral source and expression.

In other words, two people could perform the same exact action which, although it may be indistinguishable to those around them, the Lord can see the Source. Whose life is this righteousness expressing; the person who did it in obedience to what they see in the Bible, or did Christ do it through them?

According to Isa. 64:6, “All of *our* righteous acts are as filthy rags unto the Lord.” Only that which has its source in Christ is coming from the Life of God.

This is why Paul warned in 2 Cor. 11 about Satan’s emissaries being disguised as “ministers or servants of righteousness”. Since it’s difficult to identify the source of their actions, the casual observer can be easily deceived. Discernment is needed to see the source; our five senses don’t have that ability. And even spiritual discernment has to be extensively trained before someone is able to use it accurately.

(Heb. 5:13-14) Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

The words used for “good” and “evil” in this passage literally mean “good” as an expression of God’s own character being fleshed out in the person, and “evil” as an

imitation done so well that it is impossible for the natural man to tell the difference.

This is one of the reasons Satan has replaced solid food with milk as the steady diet of 21st. Christians. If their “spiritual senses” are untrained and inoperative, they are easy to deceive. The difference between milk and solid food is not the difference between simple and complex – it’s the difference between the understanding gained by the spiritual mature vs. the knowledge which is lacking in the spiritual immature. It’s an issue of progressive spiritual revelation in the meaning scripture, not the amount of academic information a person has.

Bats have the same five senses we have, but they also have something called;

“Echolocation, which is a specialized, active form of hearing enabling them to see in the dark, along with specialized touch receptors on their wings.”

Both saved and unsaved people have five senses (touch, taste, smell, hearing and seeing); but the saved person has a sixth sense which allows them to see the invisible – to see the reality behind the apparent. The problem is that most believers either don’t know they have that capability, or they are aware that it exists, but have no idea how to exercise or train it to protect themselves from deception.

Those within the body of Christ who have matured to the level of being able to “practice righteousness” in the way John is talking about, are the Christians who will not be deceived by imitations – they will not be led astray into so-called Christian actions and movements that result in a sense of shame when, at the Lord’s return, they are flooded with light and realize what went wrong.

Someone once told me their greatest fear is knowing and doing all these Christian things that occupy our time and energy, and then finding out at the end that they missed the most important thing of all. They never discovered, let alone lived out, what Paul calls ‘the deep things of God’.

(1 Cor. 2:10-11) God has revealed them to us (the apostles) through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, (including) the deep things of God.

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

A lot of commentators describe John's warning of "being ashamed at His coming" as indicating some sin they are embracing at the worst possible moment; like a Christian who is a married man in bed with another woman when the trumpet sounds. And that's a possibility; but John is going a great deal deeper than that in his warning to us.

In John's letter he's focused on the danger of false Christs, and he's tying the necessity of "abiding in Christ" as the means by which you and I can walk in the light and not be in darkness when our Lord returns. If we abide in Christ (as we've also seen in John 15 in the Vine and branches illustration) the result will be "fruit" which, in the context of 1 Jn. 2, would be genuine righteousness as opposed to imitation righteousness. Our lives will be authentic rather than artificial.

It is vital that we grow to where it is "no longer I who live, but Christ lives in (us)" (Gal. 2:20). In John's wording on this subject, abiding in Christ, walking in transparency and in the light, is our protection.

Authors like Warren Wiersby and J. Vernon McGee see "shrink back in shame" as related to the loss of rewards. Those in the Calvinism or Reformed camp see that experience as being directed at tares among the wheat; meant to warn false Christians that getting saved will protect them from this.

This is just another example of why I spent so much time in the beginning of our study of this letter emphasizing the importance of knowing the "what" and "why" of any letter we study. John is writing to *believers*, to warn and encourage them. He's not writing to unbelievers trying to find ways to convince them to be saved.

One obvious give-away for this is the fact that John includes *himself* in the warning; ". . .that we may have confidence".

Ok, we need to close up, but please keep in mind that "confidence" at the Lord's coming isn't based on perfection, or even necessarily on full maturity. It's based on abiding in Christ – on honesty, transparency and humility before God.

Jesus's offer to us was "rest", not "panic" and He said His yoke was easy and light. Life can be extremely challenging and I'd never downplay the fact that we are at war spiritually, but being ashamed at His appearing will not be the experience of those who walk in openness before the Lord, those who are willing to acknowledge their sins and who are convinced of their own inability to live a life pleasing to God apart from full dependence on Him for that life to be realized.

Keep passages like these couched in what you know of the parable of the prodigal son. His goal for us involves a combination of embracing us and placing a robe of honor around our shoulders, regardless of how imperfect we may have been. *His* priority is honesty and brokenness, not well-intended imitation.