

The Spirit Of Antichrist

1 John 2:18-23

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
www.branchofhope.org
10/19/2014*

The Spirit Of Antichrist

1 John 2:18-23

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 (1 John 2:18).

Eschatological Misdirection

Yet another 'end times' movie is hitting the local cinema. This time they have procured Nicholas Cage since, apparently, the last well-known actor who appeared in these movies has adopted a more historically/biblically tested and less sensational understanding of eschatology. Be that as it may, I thought it might be good to spend a Lord's Day addressing this.

A concern I have when it comes to this somewhat complex theological topic is what magicians call "misdirection". Misdirection is a form of deception (in this case I'm not suggesting it is intentional by the authors or producers of the movie) in which the attention of an audience is focused on one thing in order to distract its attention from another. In all of the hoopla surrounding political intrigue of the Beast, the 144,000, the rebuilding of the Temple, the Mark, etc. are we missing the fuse burning beneath our very pews?

Four times in this epistle and once in his next, John will address the issue of antichrist. These are the only times antichrist is mentioned in scripture. Lovingly addressing the disciples under his care, John warns of antichrist. He also states that it is the last hour.

So what are we to make of this very popular aspect of the Christian faith? When is the last hour and who is the antichrist?

The Last Hour

Is the last hour to be considered those last few years prior to the second coming? If that is so, how could John have said it was already the last hour? Many consider the last hour to be the period between the first and second advents of Christ; the last era in human history, also known as the millennium. There is merit to this, although John might have used a better word to clarify that – “**age**” *aionos* (as in Matthew 28:20) perhaps.

It is more likely, considering the immediate concern John seems to have for his readers, that the “**the last hour**” would be the end of the old covenant – something they were in the midst of experiencing (Hebrews 8:13). With all due respect, I am inclined to say that the most popular view today – that the last hour is the last few years prior to the second coming – is the least tenable of all views.

The Antichrist

And what about the antichrist? Is the antichrist going to be a political figure who wins the affections of the world in the last few years prior to the second coming? Is the antichrist an individual person or a series of persons? As politically incorrect as this may be today, highly respectable theologians once viewed the popes as the antichrist and not without good reason.

Or is the antichrist a spirit that will continue to oppose the church until Christ comes again? Is the antichrist to be equated with the man of sin in Thessalonians? Is the antichrist to be equated with the beast of Revelation? Suffice it to say for now that the most popular view today – that the antichrist is some modern political figure – is the least tenable of all positions. And hence the misdirection begins.

Where Are The Antichrists?

We haven't the time to examine all these theories in detail right now because I'd rather not lose the theme of the passage.¹ John says something in verse nineteen which is remarkable and worthy of our attention. He says of the many antichrists...

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 (1 John 2:19).

Speaking With Antichrist

It's astonishing that this isn't a bigger topic among Christian writers; the fact that many antichrists are among the covenant people of God. Not to sound overly severe but I've had opportunity to speak with some who I believe to fall into this category. I recall a dialogue with one of the heads of the Presbyterian Church U. S. A.

I must preface my recounting of this dialogue with an explanation, lest I be misunderstood. It is my heart's desire to see those who haven't peace with God through the blood of Christ come to know that peace by faith. Jesus made a very exclusive statement when He said "**no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**" (John 14:6). I believed Him when He said that. I have atheistic friends, I have Jewish friends, I have Buddhist friends, I have Muslim friends and Hindu friends. I don't dislike them. I care about them. I want to see them in heaven. But the Scriptures are not unclear. Speaking of Christ, we read:

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

¹ Also, the amazingly thorough and continual indoctrination via end times books and movies has all but bewitched today's church. Somewhat simple things become so elusive.

Let us not be convinced that because we strongly desire to bring the message of salvation to the lost, that we are somehow misanthropic. See should seek the heart of Christ.

When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things (Mark 6:34).

Warning someone that they're headed for hell is not the same as telling them to go to hell. There is perhaps no greater act of love than to **"blow them trumpet"** (Ezekiel 33:6) of warning.

Back to my conversation, this man considered those of Judaism to be his brothers – so in this respect the conversation was very close to the kind of conversation Jesus or His apostles might have had; all being Jewish. He considered it intolerable to convey any type of message to them (or anyone else of a what he called a sincere faith of any kind) which would suggest that apart from faith in Jesus Christ they are consigned to hell.

The Spirit Of Antichrist

I don't believe we stretch the inferences when we conclude that this is the spirit of antichrist and John tells us why.

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" (1 John 2:22, 23).

Was Jesus the promised Christ? The Messiah? The covenant keeping Son of God who would set to right the sin of the world? To deny that, John says reveals the lips of antichrist.

Simply put, if someone suggests that one has the Father, apart from having the Son, the person who suggests such a thing is antichrist. He is essentially denying the doctrine of the Father and the Son. My conversation with this man went something like this:

Sinners Go To Hell, Non-Christians Aren't Saved

It is a common tactic of the enemy, the world and even our own flesh to sling out the accusation that if you have a concern for the soul of your neighbor you must hate them. If you see them engaged in a lifestyle that the Scriptures reveal as a road to death and seek to shine the light of Christ upon them, you must be a bigot.

In order to avoid being labeled in such a way, I indicated that people don't go to hell because they're Jewish, Hindu, Muslim or any other religion. People go to hell because they are sinners. People aren't saved from hell because they reject God's only provision for man's sin, who is Jesus Christ.

Sincere Faith In The God Of Abraham

The man to whom I spoke continued to refer to his Jewish "brothers" and spoke of their sincere faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I asked him to explain the words of Jesus which seem to be a litmus test for the genuine faith of the Jews.

Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me (John 6:45).

In other words, Jews of sincere and genuine faith would recognize Jesus as the Messiah. He offered no explanation for this passage and others like it. He simply said we must re-think the way we view the scriptures and promote love and brotherhood rather than bigotry, racism and anti-Semitism.

Representing The Christian Faith

I then quoted this passage and asked him if he would use these words to represent his Christian faith: Speaking to a hostile crowd of Hebrews, Jesus said,

You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the

beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him (John 8:44).

He once again said we must re-look at scripture from the big picture. I said he was avoiding the question. My question was, "Would you use these words, somewhere, somehow to represent your Christian faith?" I am not talking about being mean-spirited or insensitive or bringing this up at an inopportune time. I merely want to know if this would be part of what you would consider to be your faith?

He said he wouldn't use those words to represent his Christian faith. I couldn't believe my ears so I had to ask the question differently. I asked, "Are you telling me then that you wouldn't use the words of Jesus Christ Himself to represent the Christian faith?" Again he avoided the question and started talking about reading the Bible as a big picture. I had to press and say, you're not answering my question. His final remark was, "I guess I am not going to." This is antichrist.

Brands Of Antichrist

John will mention antichrist later in the epistle. He instructs:

...every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already (1 John 4:2, 3).

And in 2 John he writes:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist (2 John 7).

Brands of Christianity which downplay or, in any way, move away from the necessity and sufficiency of the atoning blood of the

Son as the sole means by which men are saved is antichristian and in the spirit of antichrist. Brands of Christianity which deny the incarnation – deny that the Word was made flesh – they are deceivers and antichrist.

The Indiscernible Church

All these things work against the Sonship and sufficiency of Christ. And as a pastor I feel it incumbent upon myself to warn people that, in my opinion, so much of what I hear on the Christian air waves, read in Christian bookstores and learn by way of conversation with Christians is antichristian. I don't say this to be mean or puffed up. Our society is in a dismal state and today's church can barely be discerned from the society in which it resides. There is a reason for this. It is the spirit of antichrist in the church.

Sound discouraging. Imagine how it must have felt for the early budding and highly persecuted church of the first century. But John continues.

The Anointing

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 (1 John 2:20, 21).

All this talk of antichrist should not disturb the true Christian. The true Christian should actually hunger for the purity of the gospel to be taught no matter what the social cost.

Why Christians Stay – The Anointing

John also reminds us why we stay in the faith; why we are not among those who **“went out.”** It is because you have been anointed by the Spirit of Christ. The anointing can be a very confusing subject. Some interpret the anointing to be that time when things really get rolling down at the Christian Center. It's like kicking it into high gear. But here we read that the anointing is something that belongs

to all true believers. And the sign of having been anointed is the knowledge of the truth.

Ever Growing

The true Christian will ever grow in their knowledge of God, beware of and seek to remove the dross of antichristian thinking – and certainly seek not to be influenced by it in its effort to halt us from preaching the gospel. No, we should more fully embrace an unadulterated gospel which is not a respecter of persons but finds as it's only assignable cause the good pleasure of God Himself and it's only power the covenant blood of His Son – who came to save sinners.

Questions for Study

1. To what period does the “last hour” likely refer?
2. Discuss some ideas about the antichrist? What ideas seem tenable or untenable?
3. Where are the antichrists of which John writes?
4. How is antichrist defined according to verses 22 and 23?
5. Why do people go to hell?
6. Why aren't people saved?
7. Is it possible to have a genuine, sincere faith in the God of Abraham and reject Jesus?
8. Can you think of some examples of antichristian thinking in the church today?
9. Why do Christians stay in the faith?
10. What results from the anointing?
11. What is the only assignable cause for God's love?
12. What is the only power that can save?