

GREAT INFORMATION Pt. 1

1 John 2:18-26

In this section of John's family letter, we will get a great deal of helpful information from the aged Apostle. Information that is needed by the children of God regardless of the age, but especially in this day of the Laodicean Church age when the last day apostasy has manifested itself.

As we continue our study of this amazing book we must keep in mind John was fighting against the Gnostics and Gnosticism. Remember what I said about the Gnostics in the introduction? Let's review quickly:

In order to understand what John was opposing in this epistle it is important for us to dig a little bit. In that day there were individuals who professed to possess some type of super-knowledge. They were known as the Gnostics. They promoted what is known as "Gnosticism" which was a philosophy of religion especially concerning Jesus Christ. They held and stated that matter was essentially evil and that only the spirit is good.

Therefore, Gnosticism despised the body and held that the spirit within the body was like a seed in dirty soil.

A basic tenant of their thinking was that man rose from the mundane to the spiritual. That type of thinking resulted in two false theories concerning this Jesus of Galilee. The first was known as "docetism" which regarded the human part of Jesus as a ghost. The second was known as "cerinthianism." This heresy was taught by a man by the name of Cerinthus. He taught that Jesus was a dual personality, meaning, at times He was human and at other times He was Divine.

This is why **we MUST** understand Jesus was both God and man in one body. In one body He possessed two natures: the nature of God and the nature of man. That is why we say Jesus was very God of very God and very man of very man. He was as much God it was as if He were not man and He was as much man it was as if He were not God and yet He was both in one body!

The docetic line of the Gnostics taught incarnation impossible. They taught it was impossible for God to unite with anything evil such as a body. They taught Jesus

only “appeared” to have a body but actually did not. In fact they believed Christ’s body was not human but either was a phantasm, which means something not real or a figment of one’s imagination, or of real but celestial substance and that therefore, His sufferings were only apparent and not actual. To give a very simple example of this, they believed when Jesus walked he left no footprints in the place He was walking.

The Gnostics denied some things true about Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the incarnate Son of God, and John wanted God’s children to know how to identify them.

Verse 18 begins with a remarkable statement: “Little children, it is the last time:” If that statement was true in John’s day, how much more in our day? But in order to understand what John meant we need to understand the reference to the “last time” refers to a period of time. That period of time actually extends from the days following Christ’s presence on Earth (which refers to His ascension) to the end of the days of the Tribulation when Christ will return in the revelation.

Truth about the “last time” was not a new concept for John. No doubt John remembered that he and the other Apostles “heard that antichrists (would) shall come...” In fact, he goes on to say even in his day there were “many antichrists;” and in light of that fact he said “we know that it is the last time.”

Here is an interesting fact. John is the only writer in the New Testament to use the term antichrist. In fact he uses the word three times in his first epistle and once in his second epistle. Although he was the only writer to use the term he remembered what the Lord said about those who would come in the days preceding the great Tribulation who would be “saying I am Christ” **Matthew 24:5** and that the Lord also said they were, actually, “false Christ’s” **Matthew 24:24**.

In an effort to help us understand who John was referring to by this term, I will try and keep this study simple. Why do I say that? Well, we could, if we chose to, spend a great deal of time exploring what the Scripture has to say about the antichrist that will appear in the last days. In fact, we could review what John said about him in the **Revelation** as well as look at what Daniel said about him in the book that bears his name. But for time sake, we will forgo doing so.

Allow me to define antichrist. Actually the word refers to two things. The prefix “anti” means to be opposed to or against something or someone. Whenever that prefix is attached to a word it is done so to show opposition. It declares that

someone or something is standing in opposition to something or someone. For instance, if someone says they are “anti-American” that means they are opposed to or against America.

The fact that the Gnostics were against Christ provides us with the primary definition of antichrist. In fact, it actually refers to someone who denies the deity of Christ. It’s just that simple.

But the term antichrist not only refers to someone who is against Christ and what He represents and stands for, it also refers to someone that will one day come and proclaim he is in the stead of Christ or is a substitute for Christ.

In a day not too far in the future, two characters will appear that will fulfill both of these definitions of antichrist. One will come out of the sea of humanity. He will be a political ruler who is “against” Christ. The other will come out of the land. He will be a religious ruler who will come in an attempt to replace Christ. One will be against Christ and the other will be in the stead of Christ.

As **verse 18** continues we read; “even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know it is the last time.” In light of the current situation we find our nation and world in in this day taken by the Covid 19 pandemic, can we not easily see that there are many antichrist’s in our day who are opposed to Christ and the things of Christ?

Can we not identify them by the actions they have recently taken and the mandates they have laid down? I’m talking about the governor’s of those states denying American citizens the right to gather to worship in a safe manner while allowing abortion clinics to remain open and carry on their business as usual. Or what about the liquor stores they are allowing to remain so they can pedal their damnable drink? Or what about those newly opened marijuana stores? How can anyone consider those to be “an essential business?” And they threaten Churches with legal action if they meet at their places of worship?

What about those governors who command their state police to take license plate numbers of people who have gathered to worship in an outdoor, drive-in type form of worship which is totally compliant with social distancing expectations? Talk about antichrist! We have them in great numbers in our day! Have you noticed I

have said nothing about the antichrists of Islam and the other religions of the world who are against Christ, but I could.

As John continues to inform his readers of every generation he does so by providing insight as to how to identify someone who is antichrist. As I type this and say this, I can hear someone say what we find in **Matthew 7:1**. This verse is one the most often out-of-context used verse there is in the Scripture. It says: “Judge not that ye be not judge.” I don’t have the time to explain what Jesus was meaning in that verse **but** we need to know we can not only judge certain things but are actually commanded to judge certain. Although we are not to judge the intentions of people (only God has the ability to do that), we can are commanded to judge their actions and their words.

If you don’t believe me, listen to what John wrote in **1 John 4:1** “Beloved, believe not ever spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into this world.” We are to try the spirits by the Word of God. If their actions or words fail to match up with the written and revealed Word of God, we are commanded to reject them and understand they are against Christ.

In **verse 19** John tells us something very interesting. To put it simply, it is not everyone that says they are a Christian that actually is a Christian. And give them long enough, they will prove they aren’t.

As Christians, we have the tendency to believe everyone that makes a profession has actually been saved. But if we simply remember a couple of parables our Lord gave concerning the “wheat and the tares,” the “good fish and the bad fish” (**Matthew 13**) it might help us understand what John is saying here.

It was Jesus who said “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” **Matthew 7:21**

For some people that is a startling statement! I’m sure it takes their breathe away! But, the fact is, it is a fact. I am afraid there are a great number of unregenerated people occupying church pews in Churches around the world in our day. Although hard to imagine, it is nonetheless true. Going to Church doesn’t make a person a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes a person a car!

There are people who have talents, dress in a certain manner, speak the right kind of language, participate in all the right things, identify with the right people, have membership in some local fellowship of believers who are lost as lost as lost can be.

Have you ever wondered about someone who claims to be a Christian and seems to make a good start only to quit about as fast as they began? In fact, maybe you were there when they knelt at an altar, raised up and said they had been saved? Have you watched them walk like other Christians walk for a period of time only to watch them return to the same lifestyle they had before they made a profession of faith? Has that troubled you? Has that prompted questions in your mind and heart about them? Were they saved you wonder? Are they still saved you wonder? How can this be?

Well, let's be honest. John gives us some invaluable information in this passage of Scripture and will give us more later on in this letter. Just because a person cleans up on the outside does not mean they are clean on the inside and, John said, give them enough time they will prove who has been and who has not been. Actually, according to **2 Peter 1:4** and **2 Peter 2:20** there is a difference in getting rid of the "corruption" of this world and getting rid of the "pollution" of this world.

May I ask you a simple question? Where does a pig feel most at home? In someone else's house all cleaned up with a bow around its neck sitting at a table with their family eating dinner on china plates? Or does he feel better down in the pig pen with his own family? The answer is obvious! He feels better in the pig pen with his own family! Why does a pig feel at home in a pig pen? Because he is a pig! Because he has the nature of a pig! Even if he is taken from a pig pen, cleaned up, placed in the house with a family not his own, when he finds the door open he will run back to the pig pen as fast as he can squealing all the way home!

On the other hand, if a son is found in the pig pen, looking like a pig and smelling like a pig, the first chance to get out of the pig pen and head back home, he'll take it! Why? Because he is a son! A son may go to the pig pen but he does not belong in the pig pen with the pigs. Why? Because he is a son and a son belongs in the house with the rest of his family.

Have you ever wondered why a dog will eat something dead, vomit it up then a little later come back to go back to the place he threw up what had made him sick

and eat it once again? (YUCK!!!) The answer is simple. He does that because he is a dog. That's what dogs do because that is the nature of a dog.

Christians think the best for everyone. They believe someone when they bow at an altar, prays, and then says they have been saved. We are supposed to do that. But the truth of the matter is, not everyone who says they got saved actually got saved! It will take time to tell if they are being truthful or not, but, in time, we can tell by what they do or do not do.

Do you think any of the other eleven disciples of Christ knew Judas Iscariot was a "devil from the beginning" like Jesus did? (**John 6:70-71**) I don't! Not one of the eleven would have believed that he was! How do I know? If they had, they would have never trusted him to carry the bag.

Remember, Judas Iscariot did the same things all the other Apostles did? He accompanied them on their different preaching and miracle tours. He took part in passing out the bread and fishes received from the hands of Jesus. He drank the water which had been turned into wine at Cana. He had his feet washed by our Lord on the night he was to betray the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. When Jesus announced someone would betray Him at the Passover table (before He instituted the Lord's Supper) all eleven of the Apostles asked if they were the one Jesus was speaking of.

Remember a man by the name of Demas? At one time, Paul referred to him as being a "fellowlabourer(s)" in **Philemon 1:24**. But in **2 Timothy 4:10** we hear him say that "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Isn't Demas proving what John is saying in this passage? Unfortunately, I think so.

From both of these examples we must understand it is not the one who has a good beginning but rather the one who finishes that is a true believer. In **verse 19** John said those who "went out from ,...were (really) not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us:" The people John are referring to in this amazing verse are people who had never really been saved. They had light but never life. They had the Word of God but not the God of the Word. They were not "backsliders," as many are commonly referred to in our day. The fact is, although they were found among those who were saved, they were actually lost! And John says "they went out (from the others) that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." That is so simple even I can understand it.

Although I must bring this study to a close, allow me to say something I feel to be extremely important. If a person were to dig into heart of someone who “backslides,” do you know what he would find there? Christ! When a child of God becomes wayward or goes astray, they are never satisfied. They may find themselves in the pig pen with the pigs, but they are never satisfied with the pigs. In their heart they know they belong in father’s house with the rest of the family.

On the other hand, if one could dig into the heart of one who is only a pretender and not a possessor, the only thing that would be found is darkness and not the Christ. In that heart, there would be rebellion against Christ and no desire to be a part of those and those things which are His.

According to the Word of God, a true believer will continue to the end. They do not continue to the end in order to be saved but rather because they are saved. Here are just a few Scriptures testify to that fact:

Philippians 1:6 what God begins He completes

1 Peter 1:3-5 we are kept by the power of God

Hebrews 3:6; 3:14 both of these verse teach to prove salvation, the professing one will continue to the end

John 15:14 keeping the commandments of Jesus proves we are saved

Many other verses could be offered as support for this wonderful truth but I hope these will suffice for now.

There are many mysteries in life. One of those mysteries is why does a person make a profession of faith and then fall away? John says, in reality, the one that falls away and stays away was never really a part of those who truly believe and will continue to the end. In fact, John is saying the reason they went out from those who are saved is to leave no doubt about who and what they really are, and that is, someone who gave a profession but had no possession.

In the verses that follow, we will find more helpful information provided by the aged Apostle.

Tom Price, 2020