

## 1 John Chapter 2F

As the disciples were ascending the Mount of Olives, they marveled at the grandeur of the Great Temple in Jerusalem. And Jesus said to them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Matthew 24:3 and the disciples came to him privately, and said, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

4 "See that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.

9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

- As we reflect on the words of the Lord Jesus, let's remember: At the time of John's writing, ALL of the other Apostles had been delivered up to tribulation and put to death. ONLY John remained alive.
- The persecution brought on by Nero had caused some to abandon the faith.
- False prophets and false teachers had arisen from both inside and outside of the church. Judaizers sought to corrupt the Gospel through legalism.
- And now, a different group of imposters claiming to possess a special knowledge from God were promoting a false Christ a different Jesus.
- As you could imagine, all of these things brought concern and even confusion to many who were in the church. (And that is what is behind John's writing)

IN some ways, the Days in which John lived are similar to the days in which we live.

- False prophets, those who deny the Biblical revelation of Christ abound.
- Joseph Smith the founder of Mormonism supposedly received special revelation from God concerning a different Jesus.
- And so it is that the Latter Day Saints teach that Jesus Christ was the preexistent spirit brother of Lucifer. They say that the Wedding at Cana of Galilee was Jesus' wedding where he married both Mary and Martha. (*Journal of discourses 4:259, 2:82*) According to their writings, Jesus was a Polygamist.
- Charles Taze Russell the founder of the Jehovah's Witness Cult, taught that Jesus was NOT the eternal second person of the Trinity BUT rather the first, direct creation of God. So those who politely knock on your front door are promoting a false Christ. John would call them Antichrists.

This morning as we continue our study in the book of 1 John, the Beloved Apostle will provide insight concerning the times in which both He and We are living.

- He warns the church about those he calls “Antichrists.” Those who seek to afflict the church through oppression and false teachings.
- In this section, John accomplishes two things: First He warns his readers of the error of those who oppose Christ and second he equips believers to remain steadfast in the Gospel.
  - He warns them about the doctrinal error that was being promoted by individuals who left the church, only to turn around and attack it.
  - He equips believers by reminding them of the double blessing that God has provided in His Word and His Spirit.

Here is our outline for this morning:

- Recognizing the Times
- Resting in the Truth
- Remaining steadfast in the Gospel

### 1 Recognizing the Times

Because we are living in the last hour the spirit of antichrist continues to thrive through corrupt religions and false teachers who still plague the church.

1 John 2: 18 **Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.**

- By affectionately calling them children (Papia – Born Ones) John seeks to comfort his readers, assuring them that they have been born of God.

And with the words, **“It is the Last Hour”** John seeks to explain the events of the day, as if to say the things THAT are happening shouldn’t surprise or bewilder us because they are simply the signs of the times.

- We recognize the times and seasons in which we are living by the events that take place around us. For instance:
- When the thermometer is creeping up on 100 degrees and you work up a sweat just walking from the house to the car? You say, **“It must be Summer.”**
- So as we seek to understand the events that are taking place in the world around us we need to keep in mind, **“It is the last hour.”**
- What does John mean by the term, “Last Hour?”

The “Last Hour” refers to this present evil age, which is one of only two ages that are referred to in the New Testament. (This present evil age and The age to come.)

- And we understand from our study of the Scripture that the “Last Hour,” or this present age, actually began with the incarnation of the Lord Jesus and will conclude at his second coming.

Now following John’s logic, the evidence that proves we are in the last hour is this:

1 John 2:18B, **as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.**

- Bit of trivia, John is the only Biblical writer to use the term “Antichrist.” The term appears only 4 times in the Bible, and only in John’s writing.
- And even though he is the only writer to use this term, it’s obvious that his audience was familiar with the Biblical teaching concerning the Antichrist.

John’s readers could have studied the ancient writings of Daniel regarding the antichrist who he called “the Beast” with teeth of iron, claws of bronze, having ten horns on his head.

Certainly, they would have been taught the Olivet discourse where Jesus warned of False Christs and false prophets that would come. By this time Mark’s Gospel, containing the words of Christ, would have been circulating for more than 40 years.

The Apostle Paul’s 2nd letter to the Thessalonians, also written forty years earlier would have made its way around the church by the times of John’s writing.

2 Thessalonians 2: 3 **Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, 4 who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.**

- SO you see, when John speaks of antichrists he is quite certain that his readers are familiar with the term.
- However, here IN Chapter 2, John isn’t pointing to that one Man of Lawlessness but rather to a number of individuals empowered by the “Spirit of Antichrist.”
- Those who were presently opposing the church and leading people astray.
- This is why John commands his readers to “test the spirits,” In Chapter 4

1 John 4:1 **Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: 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.**

- Let me stop her and ask you: How DO we “test the spirits?”
- Very simply by evaluating the words that they speak, their teachings and their lifestyle by the true revelation of God in Holy Scripture.
- When I managed a grocery stores, (Egg inspectors held eggs to a light looking) SO We hold the words of false teachers up against the light of God’s Word.

Friends, as we store the Word of God up in our hearts, we will grow in knowledge and discernment. Then we will be able to recognize the lies of the enemy.

- John tells us that, the true children of God believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God came to earth & put on human flesh.

- But those who are driven by the spirit of antichrist oppose the Biblical revelation of Christ, they deny the eternal son of God who put on human flesh and came to dwell among us, to give his life a ransom for many.

In Verse 19 we discover that the false teachers, those John refers to as antichrists, were once involved in the fellowship alongside of true believers BUT now they have left, departed, vamoose John says, **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 it might become plain that they all are not of us.** (1 John 2:19)

Douglass Sean O'Donnell – Quote (*whose commentary I highly recommend said*)

“Any division within Christ’s visible church is sad, but this one, John reassures those who remain, is necessary and even beneficial to the overall health of the body. The cancer has removed itself. The rats have left the ship.”

- Simon Kistemaker summarizes this verse saying, Believers belong, Deniers depart. Believers (the us) belong (they remain in the apostolic community) Deniers (the they) depart, (*They left the communion of the saints*)
- So these Apostate Antichrists of whom John speaks were once members of the visible church, but now they seceded from it.

Now, before we move on to verse 20, I would like to draw your attention to a very important inference regarding the perseverance of the saints that arises out of vs 19.

- By saying, **They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.** John implies that perseverance in the faith is the ultimate test of genuine participation in the life of Christ.
- In other words, abandoning the faith, what we would call apostasy proves that those who walk away never actually belonged to Christ in the first place. As John says: **they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.**

Here at Harvest we believe that those whom the Father Elects, those for whom the Son died on the cross to save, those same individuals who the Spirit regenerates will in fact be preserved by the power of God and never totally or finally fall away, but will be glorified on the last day. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul:

Romans 8:29 **Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.**

This is the Biblical Doctrine of the “Perseverance of the Saints” that was established by Christ, passed on to the Apostles and recovered in the protestant reformation.

- BUT believing that doctrine doesn’t give us a license for laziness or a hall pass to sin. We don’t believe that everyone who prays a prayer, asking Jesus into their heart at

the age of 12 can go on and live their life a life of lawlessness because, well you know, “once saved always saved.”

- NO we believe that the true saints frequently examine themselves. As Paul said:

2 Corinthians 13: 5 **Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you fail to meet the test!**

- Now remember that this 1<sup>st</sup> epistle of John is built around a series of tests so that those who are truly in the faith may be assured that they possess eternal life.
- In previous weeks we looked at the test of morals and the test of love BUT here John issues a third test, the test of Truth or as some call it the test of doctrine.
- It should be obvious that those who are driven by the Spirit of Antichrist fail the test of truth. Now John turns to the church, the body of true believers and encourages them to rest securely in the truth that they have received from God.

## 2 Resting in the Truth

John who is the King of Contrasts, moves directly from the error of those who are driven by the spirit of antichrist to the TRUTH that comes by the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God to all of the redeemed. He writes:

1 John 2:20 **But you (*in distinction from the others*) have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.**

- The false teachers who threatened the church in John’s day used the words, “Knowledge” and “Anointing” to describe their erroneous religious experience.
- They arrogantly saw themselves as possessing an elevated and esoteric form of divine knowledge. They saw themselves as the recipients of a special, secret anointing.
  - I remember sitting in a church where the pastor got way off base and began corrupting the Word of God, promoting bad doctrine but doing it in such a charismatic manner that the people in the church said, “Isn’t he so anointed!” (Excuse me??)
  - At that point I didn’t really understand sound doctrine but the spirit of God within me motivated me to confront him. (*it didn’t go real well*)

Now after uncovering the error of the secessionists, those who left the fellowship of believers, John turns to COMFORT the children of God affirming the truth that they have been anointed by the Holy One, and so THEY possess the True knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.

- This word, “Anointing” literally means, “Ointment” or “Oil.” But here in this particular context the word is used figuratively of the Holy Spirit who has come to dwell within all those who are “born of God.”
- John’s words of comfort align perfectly with the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31: 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

- The Law of God IS indelibly etched upon the heart of every true believer, because every child of God has been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Ephesians 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

And that Same Holy Spirit serves as an internal ever-present teacher for those who believe. Jesus told the disciples that "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth," John 16:13

- Now in order to be absolutely clear John explicitly identifies the liars revealing the nature of their lie.

1 John 2:22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

- Most people in our day would agree that Jesus was a good moral teacher but sadly they have no desire to read his teachings. By their neglect they deny the son
- Almost ¼ of the earth's population 1.8 Billion people are Muslim. They believe that Jesus was a Prophet, but they say God is not begotten nor does he beget.
- Like the secessionists of John's day Christian Science rejects the notion that God could possibly have put on human flesh. IF he did they say he would be "manifestly finite and lose the deific character and become less than God."
- As we saw earlier both the Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses reject the Biblical revelation of Christ. ALL these fit John's description of Antichrists.
- And because there is only one way to the Father through Jesus Christ the son, no one who denies the Son has the Father.

BUT God in his mercy, for the display of his glory has chosen a remnant of people for himself, they have been cleansed by the washing of regeneration, Forgiven of all their sins, credited with the perfect righteousness of Christ and endowed with power from above by the Holy Spirit.

- John has warned us of the treacherous times that we face in this "Last Hour." He sought to equip us by reminding us of the Truth in which we stand.
- NOW John completes his exhortation by calling his readers to hold fast to the Gospel of their salvation and rely on the anointing, the Holy Spirit they received.

### 3 Remaining Steadfast in the Gospel

1 John 2: 24 **Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.**

25 **And this is the promise that he made to us — eternal life.**

- One of the strategies that John urges his readers to employ against the influence of the false teachers in these last days is to hold firmly to the message of the Gospel, which they heard from the beginning.
- This is sound advice for every generation of believers.

Friends, I was saved at the age of 16 and throughout my 46 years as a believer, I have seen the church endure every wind of doctrine, every new and innovative program and I have sat under the best and the worst of teachings.

I've soared the emotional heights of ecstatic Worship, and sang historic hymns at 10<sup>th</sup> Presbyterian in Philadelphia.

- Along the way I discovered what John says is the key to standing firm in these last days and that is letting the Gospel that I heard in the beginning abide in me.

WE never outgrow the Gospel! It doesn't just open the door to eternal life, it is the KEY to abiding in Christ.

- The cross is my defense when the accuser of the brethren slanders me before the Father; And when I am drowning in a sea of condemnation, the Gospel lifts my eyes to the one who is my deliverer.
- By the work of Christ I am able to forgive those who offend me and love those who hurt me.
- The Gospel provides hope and sanity in a world that has gone crazy.

John reminds us of this great benefit when he says: **If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father**

- As the Word of God, the Gospel of our Salvation continues to abide in us, then WE receive the benefits of ongoing communion with Christ and with the Father and this is eternal life.
- Now in verse 26-28 John summarizes his warning and equipping of the saints by saying:

1 John 2: 26 **I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.**

27 **But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie — just as it has taught you, abide in him.**

- Here we see that John's readers were actually under siege by the false teachers. BUT John is confident that the Holy Spirit who abides in them is greater than any attack they might face from outside. John will say in chapter 4:

1 John 4:4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

- Remember the anointing that we have received is the indwelling Holy Spirit by whom we have been sealed for the day of redemption.
- John encourages the Saints telling them that their most fundamental defense against deception is the Spirit of Truth who dwells within them.

When John says, you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie

- He is not saying that you can go up into the mountains and meditate on your navel trusting the inner voice of the Spirit to guide you into all truth.
- When Christ ascended on High he gave gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8)

Ephesians 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

- God uses men as the means of grace to equip believers for works of ministry.
- These gifted men share the Word of God with God's people and the Holy Spirit applies the Word to the heart of every believer leading them into all truth.
- That same Holy Spirit provides discernment when we face the lies of antichrist

28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

- Our confidence on the day of the Lord is in Christ alone.
- The same Gospel that holds us fast in these last days will be our security when we stand face to face with Almighty God.
- NONE of us will boast in the works we have done on that final day. Instead, we will stand before God in the pure white robes of righteousness that we have been freely given in Christ.
- AND the Gospel will be our eternal SONG.

Revelation 5: 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."