

THE CHURCH IN AN ANTICHRISTIAN WORLD I THE LAST DAYS (I JOHN 18-28)

At this point in the book John begins to consider those things outside of ourselves that are a danger to the life and vitality of the ongoing Christian experience. Up until this John has addressed those things within us, the recurring phrase has been *"if any man..."* and he has dealt with issues like indwelling sin, actual sin, (1:6-2:2) hatred of our brethren (2:9) and love for the world (2:15-17). But notice, while the danger that John mentions here is outside of us as individuals, it is within the Church. The greatest danger to the Church is from within. And so John draws our attention from the individual Christian in particular to the work of the Church in general. John identifies the period of time as *"the last time"* (Vs. 18) and by this phrase means the period between the first and second advent of Christ (See Micah 4:1; Joel 2:28 *cf.* Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2-3; I Peter 1:20-21; I Corinthians 10:11). This is a period recognized by incredible satanic opposition (Vs. 18), represented by immense spiritual blessing (Vs. 20) and requiring intense spiritual discernment (V's 24, 27).

1. BE CALM (VS. 18)

In times of persecution or prophesied darkness the tendency of the Church is either or despair and pessimism leading to complete inactivity or to a frenzy of activity motivated by an uninformed zeal (Romans 10:2). John informs us here that this influx of antichrists does not take God by surprise and although there is danger in the Church we must remain calm keeping our eye on Christ and not on the Visible Church.

2. BE CONSTANT (VS. 24)

Six times from V's 24-28 John uses the word μένω (meno) "abide" "remain" "Continue" in contrast to those who went out in Vs. 19. The emphasis is on abiding in that which they heard from the beginning (Vs. 24 *cf.* 2:7; 1:1 *cf.* II Timothy 1:13; II Thessalonians 2:15).

3. BE CONFIDENT (VS. 28)

They were to remain "in Him" (Vs. 28) knowing that that anointing would continue to remain in them (Vs. 27). This was the source of confidence they would have at His appearing (*cf.* 4:17) the opposite of which to be shamed away from Him (Vs. 28 *cf.* Matthew 25:41)..