

# “ANTICHRIST IS COMING!”

I JOHN 2:18-19 Pastor Keith E. Gephart

## INTRODUCTION

This is sober teaching! Some might say, even scary! But John here is seeking to protect the people of God—true believers in fellowship with God and with one another from false teachers—heretics—who deny that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh,” that “Jesus is the Christ” (cf. v. 22; 4:2). The one who “has the Son, has life” (5:12).

Christian, you need to know what is true and hold on to the truth! You must be able to recognize “antichrist” when you see him! The church must be pure from all “antichrists.” They are not “of us”—they have no true fellowship with us.

## BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS. IT IS THE LAST HOUR!

- I. WE ARE IN THE END-TIMES (18)
  - A. John addresses “children”—John’s age, experience, and authority give him the right to teach them, and their loving relationship demands a favorable response.
  - B. “Last hour” appears only here in the NT—it means what it sounds like.
    1. John does not say that the final stages of “the last hour” have arrived, but only that all the indications point to the swift resolution of events toward Christ’s return.
    2. Believers have held to a sense of imminence in relation to Jesus’ return from the early stages of Christianity as evidenced in the NT.
    3. This expression would be a close equivalent with “the last days,” “last times” in I Pet. 1:20; Jude 18, “in the last time (singular) in I Pet. 1:5. Moreover, John himself is the only one to use a similar expression “the last day” (Jn. 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48), and always of the end of the world at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.
    4. John has just spoken of the “passing away” of “the world” and the remaining of God’s people. Also, v.18 here speaks of the coming antichrist which indicates a specific eschatological period.
    5. They lived in an hour that was eschatological in nature and movements were occurring that made possible the bursting out into the open the returning Savior at any time. Such surely has continued to be the same since John’s day. God’s longsuffering and mercy toward those still being saved holds back Christ’s return (II Pet. 3:8-9).
    6. Instead of history running a straight course toward the end as it was prior to Christ’s coming, now, so to speak, it runs a parallel course not toward the end, but alongside the end “and on the brink of” the end. History is at all times near that great event.
    7. In the Christian era, it is always five minutes to midnight. But as ‘the course of things’ runs along the edge of the final consummation, that edge at times becomes a knife-edge, and at such times the sense of its being ‘the last hour’ is especially acute.
    8. Jesus had forbidden speculation about a date of His return—no one knows that time (Mt. 24:26)
- II. ANTICHRISTS HAVE ARISEN (18)
  - A. “Antichrist is coming”—and he is; remember, John also wrote Revelation--& chapters 13, 17, 19.
    - Such a futuristic present tense “assumes the future coming of antichrist to be as certain as present reality.
    - It is interesting to note that both Christ and Antichrist were expected to come—Christ with fond hope; Antichrist with genuine dread. But both were certainly coming.
    - John is the only one who uses the term “antichrist”: here twice, v. 22; 4:3; II Jn. 7.
    - The prefix *anti* has either the idea of “instead of” or else “in opposition with”; both ideas are identical in the word *antichristos*. Antichrist is one who usurps Messiah’s authority and honor under false pretenses and he opposes the rightful owner of these honors.
    - The “hearing” is from their teachers—Jesus—false prophets & teachers, abomination of desolation; Paul—“man of sin”—II Thes. 2:3-9; Peter & Jude—false teachers; John himself. Compare the OT foundation—e.g. Dan. 7, 9, & 11.
  - B. But many “antichrists have arisen”

1. The perfect tense in connection with the many antichrists who “have come/arisen” indicates not only their past arrival but also their present existence and activity.
2. “Many” shows that these antichrists are a strong group.
3. The verb is literally “have come into being,” and this verb presents a **sharp contrast with** the true Christ who exists from all eternity (John 1:1; I John 1:2).
4. These many antichrists serve both as forerunners of the real antichrist of the last times, and also give evidence that his spirit is already at work in the world.
5. The presence of “antichrists” makes clear that the coming of “antichrist” is a near reality, and shows that “the mystery of iniquity/lawlessness is already at work” (II Thes. 2:7).
6. The reality of the situation is evident to all true believers with no exceptions (18d).
7. John in no fashion rationalized away the notion of a coming personal Antichrist. Instead, the many antichrists point to the future and the reality of the “last hour.”

### III. THE TWO-FOLD SPIRITUAL REALITY—“THOSE WITH US” AND THOSE “NOT OF US” (19)

#### A. Antichrists have originated from within the professing Church—“They went out from us.”

1. Their going out was voluntary—they left because they believed and taught differently; there was no comfortable room for them within the church!
2. They were never really a part of true Christianity—“they were not **of us**. [same exact words]
3. “If they had been ‘of us’ they would have remained with us.”
  - Perseverance is a sure sign of genuine faith and salvation.
  - They resembled Judas who went out “and it was night”—literally and spiritually, being separated from God’s grace—for he had forsaken His Master and was betraying Him while denying his faith.
  - Those who persevere do so due to God’s regenerating power that continues to work within them. This verse shows the validity of making a distinction between the visible church and the invisible church.
4. These defectors had been members of the church but inwardly they never shared the inner spiritual life of the church.
  - How important it is to note that many a person who is said to be a “backslider” had never “slid forward” in the first place—they had never been converted.
  - Making a spectacular beginning in the Christian life and profession is not what matters most; those who continue and bear fruit are truly those who are genuine. Enduring for a while does not count.

#### B. Separation of such antichrists/false teachers is divinely intended—“in order that”

1. This was not the purpose of the false teachers.
2. God will not tolerate the mixture of truth and error.
3. These persons left of their own volition, but behind the secession was the divine purpose that they should be made manifest.
4. Their departing was their unmasking. What is counterfeit cannot remain forever hidden.
5. The point of the last words is, **none of those** (they all) **who have left as antichrists are of us**—without exception.
6. Benefits of their departure: The church is purified. Truth and error become clearly distinguished.

### CONCLUSION

In making this statement, John assures his readers that they need not be shaken in their faith by the departure of their former associates. John’s stress on “of us” (4 times) and “with us” (once) indicates that he identifies himself with them and also that they are powerfully unified in the Lord. **Believers are important, not heretics.**

Although John shows in this passage that apostasy is possible, he also shows that it is possible only for those who have never really made Christ their own, never fully given themselves to Him.

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