

- c. What is the significance of John's writing to the older men of the church "because you know Him Who is from the beginning?"
 - d. Why does John address the young men, "Because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the evil one?"
3. I John 2:15-17
- a. What is the meaning of "love" as John uses it here?
 - b. What is the basis of the conclusion, "Man cannot but love something?"
 - c. What three classifications does John use for the "things of the world?"
 - d. What is the meaning of the word for lust . . . vs. 16 & 17
 - e. What is the meaning of "the lusts of the flesh?"
 - f. What is the meaning of "the lusts of the eyes?"
 - g. What is the meaning of the "vainglory of life?"
 - h. If there is nothing essentially wrong with these things, why does John demand that we not love them?
 - i. What is the result of loving God?
 - j. What is the result of loving the things of the world?
 - k. How does the statement that a Christian has "passed away" reflect fuzzy thinking about the results of love?

CHAPTER VI

TO WALK IN THE LIGHT IS TO SHARE GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD JESUS

(The Third Test . . . The First Time)

I John 2:18-28

A. *The Text*

"Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that anti-christ cometh, even now have there arisen many anti-christs; whereby 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 they all are not of us. (20) And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye

know all things. (21) I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth. (22) Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the anti-christ, even he that denieth the Father and the Son. (23) Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. (24) As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father. (25) And this is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal. (26) These things have I written unto you concerning them that would lead you astray. (27) And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him. (28) And now, my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

B. *Try to Discover*

1. How our faith in Jesus as God's only begotten Son is evidence that we are in fellowship with God.
2. What is the meaning of anti-christ.
3. What does our anointing from the Holy Spirit have to do with the truth that Jesus is the Christ.
4. Who are those who "went out from us."
5. How does the promise of eternal life relate to our holding fast the message of the Gospel.
6. How does being mindful of our anointing keep us from denying Jesus.

C. *Paraphrase*

"Little children! it is the last hour; And just as you have heard that an antichrist is coming. Even now antichrists have become many, Whence we perceive that it is the last hour: (19) From among us they went out, But they were not of us; For if of us they had been they would in that case have abode with us; But it came to pass in order that they might be made manifest, because all are not of us. (20) And ye have an anointing from The Holy One, Ye all know: (21) I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, But because ye know

it, And because no falsehood is of the truth. (22) Who is the False One; Save he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? The same is the anti-christ. He that denieth the Father and the Son. (23) Whosoever denieth the Son neither hath he the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. (24) As for you what ye have heard from the beginning in you let it abide. If in you shall abide that which from the beginning ye have heard ye also in the Son and in the Father shall abide. (25) And this is the promise which he hath promised unto us, the age-abiding life. (26) These things have I written unto you concerning them who would lead you astray. (27) And as for you the anointing which ye have received from him abideth in you, and ye have no need that anyone be teaching you; but as his anointing is teaching you, and is true and is no falsehood even just as it hath taught you abide ye in him. (28) And now dear children abide ye in him, in order that if he be made manifest we may have boldness and not be shamed away from him by his presence."

D. *Comments*

1. Preliminary Remarks

The argument of John in this passage was a simple one to himself and his first century audience. It is not so simple to us in the twentieth century. We have lost much of the theological background against which it was presented.

Briefly stated, John's logic is this; we know it is the last hour. We know this because many antichrists have come. The reason the presence of the antichrists proves it is the last hour is that the antichrists are against Christ. Had He not come, they could not oppose Him. Their presence is proof He has come, and therefore, proof it is the last hour.

The Jews divided all time into two ages. The present age, which preceded the coming of the Messiah, and the "last time" or "Day of the Lord," which would be ushered in with the coming of the Messiah. John here contends that the fact of the last hour is proven by the presence of antichrists. What he does not say, but what was, nevertheless, inherent in his use of the term "last hour" is that the presence of the last hour is proof that Christ has come.

This is the fact denied by the gnostics. It was their denial that Jesus is the Christ that made them antichrists.

The third test by which one may know that he has eternal life and is in fellowship with the Father is his attitude toward the Christ. To

deny that He has come in the person of Jesus is to demonstrate an attitude that is antichrist. To confess that He has indeed come marks one as a child of God and in His fellowship.

2. Translation and comments

2. a. Evidence of a last hour . . . v. 18

(18) "Little children, it is a last hour, and just as you heard that an antichrist is coming, so also now many antichrists have become: whereby we know it is a last hour."

Today, no subject presented in the entire Bible is the object of more confusion than "the last hour." To avoid becoming embroiled in this chaos, we must set aside all preconceptions and remember the historical purpose of John's writing of this letter. We must let the author say, in his own language, what he would have us hear.

There is no "the" with "last hour" here. John describes that which has the nature of a "last hour," rather than a particular "last hour."

The terms "last hour" and "last days" seem to be closely related, sometimes interchangeable, throughout the Bible. In the early part of the Old Testament, they referred to the time when Israel would enter the Promised Land. In the prophets, these same terms are used for the time of the coming of the Messiah. In Acts 2:16-ff, Peter applies this language, as employed by the prophet Joel, to the birthday of the church. This theme is repeated frequently through the Old Testament, and was a chief topic of speculation during the four hundred silent years between the Old and New Testaments.

Over the years of these usages, the phrase "last hour" came to have significance which was familiar to those who first read John's letter. It is another of those well-known terms which John delights in pouring full of Christian meaning.

"Last hour" indicated, to them, the end of one era and the beginning of another. "A last hour" marked more than the time of annihilation. Destruction was followed by re-creating.

A "last hour" denoted a time of consummation. It was the time when an epoch of history reached that end toward which the providence of God had been moving it. The accomplishment of the one was also the beginning of another.

It is in this same vein that the Hebrew writer says, "God . . . hath at the end of these days, spoken unto us in His Son . . ." "*These days*" are the days when God "spoke unto the fathers by the prophets." The con-

summation, the intended end of these days, was reached when, *at the end of these days*, God spoke to us in His Son. This also marked the beginning of the new age of grace as well as the end of the old age of law.

Paul says much the same things in Galatians 3:6-29. What God began in Abraham reached its intended end in the coming of the Christ. His coming, at the same time, marked the beginning of the new covenant age.

Luke 24:44-47 leaves no doubt that Jesus saw His crucifixion and resurrection as the end of "the Law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms." At the same time He saw it as the beginning of a new era when "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

The crux of John's letter is: will an individual, in *this* last hour identify himself with that which is passing away or that which is new and eternal? I John 2:15-17, which immediately precedes this statement concerning the last hour, sets the choice clearly before us.

In recent years a great deal has been made of the assumption that the first century Christians, including the writers of the New Testament, were mistakenly anxious about the second coming of Christ. It has been said that their insistence upon preparation for His momentary return indicates they did not know whereof they spoke on the matter.

This is not a necessary conclusion. It *is* true that the New Testament writers had much to say about the second coming of Christ. It is equally true, however, that they saw this life as a period of preparation for that which would be ushered in in its fullness by His second coming. Since this preparation ends for the individual, either at the second coming or at his own death (depending entirely upon which comes first), it is just as important for one to be ready for the second coming *now* (in case of his own death) as *then* when He actually does come. This life of preparation is also the beginning of eternal life.

The passage of more than eighteen hundred years since John wrote "it is a last hour," does not alter the necessity to realize that the final word of God concerning life and death has been spoken in Christ. John's intention is that we treat every hour of the Christian age as a last hour. It has been five minutes until midnight since Pentecost!

As proof that it is "last hour," John calls attention to the presence of many antichrists. Be alert here for a play on words: Christ, antichrist and christma (the anointing of believers.)

Some have supposed that "The Antichrist" is to be expected in the closing days of the Christian Era. Perhaps so. However, it is more reasonable to conclude from Scripture that the presence of antichrist indicates the Christian Era itself is a last hour. It is the end toward which God's providence in human history has moved. It will issue in the beginning of whatever lies beyond in the age of ages.

It is significant that the designation "antichrist" is used only in the epistles of John; and nowhere else in the entire Bible. John mentions it in this passage twice, in 4:3 once and in II John 7 once. Some have identified Antichrist as an individual person with the "Man of Sin," II Thessalonians 2, and the Beast of Revelation 13. *The Bible does not make this identification!*

There are those who believe that "the Antichrist" is to be expected in the time just preceding the second coming of Christ. Perhaps so. John does not use the term in this way. On the contrary, it would seem he calls attention to the many antichrists so as to correct a false teaching which made an individual Antichrist some sort of super monster. John says "You have heard that Antichrist is coming," and immediately adds, "... many antichrists have come."

Historically, the term *antichristos* in pre-Christian language meant either an opponent or adversary of Christ, or one who sought to put himself in Christ's place. In the latter sense, the opposition is not open and clear cut. Rather, as in the case of the Gnostics against whose influence John wrote, it was insidious and subtle.

It has been the hallmark of devoted Protestantism from its inception to identify "The Antichrist" with the Pope. During, and just prior to, World War II, a number of Fundamentalist radio preachers were able to support their programs on the air by playing to the appetites of their listeners for the sensational satisfaction of their curiosity. This was done by identifying first Mussolini and then Hitler as "The Antichrist." This they presented as proof that "the last hour" was upon us and the end of the world was imminent.

Many popes, as well as Hitler and Mussolini have long since passed from the scene. The end is not yet, but the subtle, insidious attempt of false teachers to lead astray the disciples of the Christ is still with us. Hereby we know that it is *still* a last hour!

To John, the subtle denial of the deity of Jesus, the false teaching which separated the human from the divine in Him and so opened the way to all sorts of sensualism in those who claimed to follow Him, was

antichrist. Today's "liberalism," and "new morality" fit perfectly John's understanding of antichrist. They are not *new*, but are present, in varied forms, in every age.

Antichrist is the subtle but deadly denial of His deity by those who claim to follow Him. It is the removal of all moral absolutes, the opening of the gates of licentiousness for those who dare to wear His name!

b. The antichrists and the anointed ones . . . v. 19

(19) "They went out of us, but they were not of us: for if they were of us they would have remained with us: but (they went out) in order that they might be manifest that they all are not of us."

The *gnostics*, with their claim to superior enlightenment, were not really Christians. No one *can* be who denies Jesus as Christ.

The antichrists left the Christians fellowship because they were not all to be found in the ranks of the church. John's statement is that even those who had been in the fellowship had left, which was proof that "*all* of them were not of us." (We would have said "*none* of them are of us.") Neither the gnostic in the church nor the gnostic outside the church is really of us. The physical presence of a false teacher in the assembly does not make him a Christian! The proof is that those who have been in the fellowship are leaving. They have not been excommunicated. They are simply not at home among people who believe in the deity of Jesus.

How timely this is for our day! We live in times which are historically the most significant for the church since the beginning of the Reformation. Old denominational lines are fading. Cutting across them all is the modern "spirit of antichrist," which denies the inspiration of scripture, the deity of Christ and His Lordship.

It is not necessary to "excommunicate" these radicals of the left. It takes but little serious thought to recognize that "they are not of us." Perhaps it is time for those who do believe the Gospel to simply acknowledge the situation which exists. Some who claim to be Christians, simply aren't!

c. The anointed ones know they are anointed . . . v. 20

(20) "And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know it."

The most prominent concept of the church presented in the New Testament is that it is the continuing presence of Christ, the Anointed One, on earth. The church is "His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1:23) As such, it is to continue that which "Jesus began, both to do and to teach." (Acts 1:1)

Individually, what we church members endure for His sake is to "fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ . . . for His body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24) It is the church "to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory." (Col. 1:27) All that God has revealed or hopes to accomplish in Human history is now the stewardship of the church which John considers as the fellowship of anointed ones.

This conviction is in John's reminder: "You have an anointing." The word *Christos*, translated Christ, means "Anointed One." It is not strange that those who are in fellowship with Him, who are the full-filling fellowship (Eph. 1:23) called His body, should also share the anointing! Christians also are "anointed ones!" The word *chrisma* (anointed) has the same root as *Christos* (Christ).

Peter recognized this truth when, on Pentecost, he applied the prophecy of Joel 2:28-ff to the church. "And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth my Spirit upon all flesh . . .," is fulfilled in ". . . ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him." (Acts 2:17-ff) As A. T. Robertson puts it, "This anointing is open to all Christians, not just a select few." Antichrists are against those anointed, both Jesus and His disciples! Saul of Tarsus learned this on the Damascus road.

The English version is misleading when it says "ye know all things." The preferred reading is "you all know it." That is, you all know (and this is the knowledge of experience) that you have the anointing. It is impossible to persuade one, who shares the anointing, that Jesus is not the Anointed One!

d. The anointing is associated with truth . . . v. 21 (21) "I did not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because every lie is not of the truth."

Paul intimates that John here affirms, "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things . . ." (I Cor. 2:14-15)

John is not writing because his readers do *not* know the truth but because they *do* know it. No matter that self-acclaimed intellectuals make lofty claims to special knowledge. Those who share the anointing of Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit have done so because they first accepted the truth. They have known it from the beginning. The

most unlettered Christian need not shrink before the self-proclaimed scholarship of anyone who denies the deity of Jesus! The knowledge of experience is more reliable than that gained by philosophical deduction.

e. The decisive proof of falsehood . . . v. 22 & 23

(22) "Who is the liar if not the one denying, "Jesus is not the Christ?" This is the antichrist, the one denying the Father and the Son. (23) Everyone denying the Son is not having the Father."

When John says, "Who is the liar if not the one denying, 'Jesus is not the Christ?'" He has not stooped to name calling. The question is vastly more profound than that! Whoever denies the deity of the man, Jesus, has denied the fundamental reality of the universe. (Cf. John 1:1-4)

Anyone making this denial is antichrist! (See on verses 18 and 19 above) Whoever denies the deity of Jesus denies the Father also! Jesus said as much Himself, as John records in His Gospel. (John 5:19-ff)

There are those today, as there were in John's day, who believe they can share the Christian belief in God as Father without acknowledging that Jesus is His Son . . . not just a Son but the Only Begotten Son. John's contention is that this is impossible.

Men know God, as Father, only through Jesus (John 14:6-9). If Jesus is no more than a sort of super-philosopher, then men do not really *know* that God is Father at all. The idea that God even wanted to be Father came from Him.

Take away the divine Sonship of Jesus and you have destroyed Christianity at its base. The entire concept of brotherhood between men begins with the Fatherhood of God. If God is not the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," He is not the Father of anyone!

f. The test of eternal life . . . v. 24 & 25

(24) "As for you, what you heard from the beginning, let it remain in you. If in you is remaining what you heard from the beginning, you are also in the Son and are remaining in the Father."

What you heard from the beginning . . . The author calls us back beyond the rise of false teachers. He entreats us to set aside the confusion introduced by falsehood. We are to allow that to remain in us which was the original message. God is Light (See above on I John 1:5).

Since God is light, and all truth comes from Him, darkness and falsehood are dispelled from the one who holds firm this message. The mes-

senger was the Son. We cannot hold fast the message without holding fast the messenger. "Whosoever receiveth me, receiveth Him that sent me . . ." (Luke 9:48) These are Jesus' words, and they are part of "that which we have heard." (I John 1:1) This is the standard by which truth is determined. Anyone denying it denies truth, and so is a liar.

To know God is to have eternal life. (John 17:3) The promise is conditioned by the knowledge of Him whom the Son revealed. To deny Jesus is God's Son is to forfeit all claim to the promise.

g. Reminder of the anointing . . . v. 26 & 27

(26) "These things I wrote to you concerning the ones leading you astray. (27) And the anointing which you received from Him is remaining you, (and you have no need that one keep on teaching you: but as His anointing is teaching you concerning all things, and it is true and is not a lie), and just as He taught you, you remain in Him."

Those who hold fast the message which they heard before the rise of the antichrists still have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. They are still the continuing presence of the Christ (the Anointed One) in the world of men. If this real presence of the Holy Spirit is kept in mind, it is "the earnest of our inheritance . . ." (Eph. 1:14) It is the down payment. In receiving this anointing we have already received the "first installment" of the eternal life which God has promised. With this in mind it becomes extremely difficult to reject the promise itself. So the anointing becomes a point of appeal by John for his readers to hold fast the truth that Jesus is the Christ.

Again, parenthetically, John underscores his claim that the consciousness of what they have already experienced is theirs. They have no real need to be reminded.

h. Recurrent plea for persistence . . . v. 28

(28) "And now, dear children, remain in Him, in order that if He should be manifest we may achieve boldness from before Him and not be shamed off from Him."

John's convictions about Jesus are real. He *is* God's Son. He *is* alive. He *is* coming again. Soon or late, "and every eye shall see Him . . ." (Rev. 1:7)

There will be no greater shame at His coming than that of those who once knew Him and then denied Him. There will be no greater joy than that experienced by the faithful at His coming.

E. Questions for Review

1. What is the significance of the fact that there is no "the" with last hour? . . . v. 18
2. What is the purpose of I John?
3. What do the terms "last hour" and "last day" seem to indicate in pre-Christian usage?
4. In what sense may the entire Christian era be considered a last hour?
5. What light do Acts 2:16-ff and Galatians 3:6-29 throw on John's discussion of a last hour in connection with the Christian's anointing of the Holy Spirit?
6. What is the literal meaning of the word Christ?
7. If one is against Christ, is he not opposed to all those who are anointed of God?
8. Who, besides Jesus, may be called "anointed ones?"
9. Does the Bible anywhere identify antichrist with the "Man of Sin?"
10. If the coming of Christ is the beginning of a last hour, is not the coming of those who oppose Him and His anointed ones also proof of the same?
11. Are there antichrists in the world today? Explain.
12. What proves that the antichrists were not "of us?" . . . v. 19
13. What is the relationship of the church to the presence of Christ on earth today? . . . v. 20
14. Who receives the anointing of the Holy Spirit?
15. Is "scholarship" to be feared by the uneducated Christian? Explain . . . v. 21
16. What is the decisive proof of falsehood? . . . v. 22-23
17. Can one claim honestly to know God as Father while denying the deity of Jesus?
18. Who first presented the idea that God is Father?
19. What is the condition of eternal life presented by John in this passage? . . . v. 24-25
20. What is the standard by which all truth is determined?
21. What is the relationship between knowledge of God and presence of eternal life?

22. How does the awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit make the denial of Christ less likely?
23. Who has most reason to be afraid and ashamed in the presence of Jesus? . . . v. 28

HEREBY WE KNOW

PART III

I John 2:29—4:6

Fellowship With God Considered
As Divine Sonship
Tested by The Outward Demonstration In Us
Of God's Attitude Toward:

1. The Guiltless Life
2. Love For His Children
3. His Son

CHAPTER VII

DIVINE SONSHIP INTRODUCED

I John 2:29

A. *The Text*

"If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him."

B. *Try to Discover*

1. The meaning of righteous and righteousness.
2. The relationship of divine sonship to personal righteousness in terms of cause and effect.
3. How righteousness is an unavoidable test of truth for the claim to be a son of God.