



CAPITOL COMMISSION

TAKING STOCK OF THINGS (1 John 2:18-27)

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It is always wise to take a current assessment.

Reminds me of the old adage “when you are up to your armpits in alligators it is easy to forget your original objective was to drain the swamp”¹

Governments around the world, including that of our own nation and state, are presently being forced to take stock of things economic and to ask the questions pushed aside for far too long. Reminds me of another adage “chickens always come home to roost”²

By the time of John’s writing, the “alligators” were on the move and experiencing a measure of success.

We sense urgency in John’s writing. In his mind, **timing** is of the essence. There are also **parties** of concern. But the fundamental concern is: **The Lie**. There is also his suggested **solution** and focus.

¹⁸Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. ²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. ²¹I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²²Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. ²³Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. ²⁶These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

The experience of this body of believers is representative of what had been transpiring throughout the churches of Asia Minor as indicated in John’s Revelation of Jesus Christ, chapters 2 & 3 and in terms of what the Apostle Paul had predicted when he spoke with the Ephesians elders for the last time³.

TIMING

It is the last hour. John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is not making a tentative suggestion but an emphatic and inspired declaration. John says, “It is”. It is the **last hour**. Now, John does know how to tell time! When he says it is the last hour, he means, the **last** hour. Not the next to the last hour, but **the last hour**. It is here we begin to tread lightly, given the plethora of opinions on this particular **hour**.

Without addressing an answer to that question at this time our first thought ought to be: “hour of what?” The last hour of the day, week, month, year, Roman Empire, Antipas’ reign, etc.? The last hour **of what?**

John surely knows without confusion and one naturally assumes he expects his audience to know, given he does not specify or explain. John simply informs them, “It is the last hour”!

PARTIES

There are at least three groupings: 1) Defectors, 2) Confused, and 3) Persuaded.

The defectors are gone: good riddance. Most importantly, it is known **why** they have departed. John’s obvious and immediate concern is for the *confused* and/or *uncertain*. This group needs clarification and grounding which John proceeds to provide.

THE LIE

The defectors left because of one clear teaching, one cardinal doctrine: **The Incarnation**. They could not hold to this teaching, but actively taught against it. This is quite probably the defector’s key issue: how can God become a man? Unthinkable! Infinity, Immensity, Omniscience, Omnipotence, Aseity⁴ cannot be confined to matter! Because their minds would not grasp or embrace this clear teaching from the founders of The Faith, they denied it, taught against it, and defected taking others with them. This defection came to John’s attention and he took immediate action. His response: clear teaching. John labels those teaching this pernicious doctrine: **antichrists**.

John is the only New Testament author who uses this term: four times in this writing and once in his second epistle. John calls attention to the fact they had heard of this teaching regarding antichrist from him, since no other inspired writer speaks of **antichrist**. John **never** refers to a specific individual as **the antichrist** but rather to the content of a specific teaching.

AN ASIDE

Undoubtedly you have encountered the mantra “Doctrine divides: Mission Unites”. If you haven’t, it is raising its head again on the religious scene. (Remember: what goes around, comes around. Or, as Solomon said: “there is no new thing under the sun” [Ecclesiastes 1:9]).

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAY @ 8:30AM, ROOM 150 EAST WING

PENNSYLVANIA

TAKING STOCK OF THINGS

In the mind of John, **doctrine is meant to divide**. "...They went out from us because they were not of us..." John's effort is not to unite via mission. He means to maintain the division which has come to pass and maintain it on the basis of Doctrine. Truth is truth. A is not B. White is not Black!

The question then becomes one of which doctrines are to be held as absolutely essential, departure from which justifies division?

Sadly, church history records divisions over a host of doctrines held by some as absolutely **essential**. Most notably in 1054 we have a division over what is known as "the procession of the Holy Spirit", dividing the Latin Church from the Eastern, to this day.

The next major division occurs in the 16th century led primarily as a result of Martin Luther's concerns/teachings. We could probably spend the morning reciting divisions with which we individually familiar. On my part, I am amazed at what some of us consider absolutely **essential** to **The Faith**.

APPLICATION

What do you believe to be the "essentials"?

JOHN'S SOLUTION

Their "anointment". At some point in time, historically, God the Spirit opened their eyes to the truth of the gospel.⁵ They embraced the truth. That reality bore testimony to God's sovereign grace, for no man can embrace this truth of the gospel unless and until God moves from on high.⁶ John is calling them back to their "first moment" or "first love".⁷ Obviously, the anointment is a body of information, for John said "...it taught you...".

Herein lies one of the wonders, yea, seeming mysteries of Christianity. It is a supernaturally originating and supernaturally revealed belief system communicated via human language. One can grammatically understand and grasp what is being said, but be unable to embrace or own it personally unless and until God from on high opens the individual's mind.⁸

John is pleading with them to trust what they initially believed and to reject what the deniers were suggesting. John had obviously laid a good and sufficient foundation when they had come to faith, one designed to "keep" them in the face of the coming **last hour**. This, I believe, is what John refers to as their "anointment".

THE HOPED FOR EVENT

It is as if John is saying to this audience, "...hold on just a little bit longer. It is almost time..."

John intends for his words to encourage and invigorate his audience such that they will "hold on". Here, again, we are forced back to the initial comment of John: "...it is the last hour..."

Whatever John meant by that admonition, it was designed by God the Spirit to enliven his audience to perseverance in the face of this opposition in that specific **last hour**. And John's audience would naturally have expected that last **hour** to end.

FOCUS

Remember the 'anointing'!

APPLICATION

Each of us will face a metaphorical **last hour**: physically, it may well be an unusual and debilitating injury; psychologically, it may be a period of deep depression while spiritually it may be a period of unusual doubt or the questioning of God's love and grace. It most probably won't be our **last hour** chronologically.

Each of us has a race to run, a course to follow and in that running and on that course we will, in all probability, have one or more metaphorical **last hours**.

In such an **hour** *correct doctrine* is to be our defense, bulwark, high tower. The Psalmist said it best: "...It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes...- I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me..." Psalm 119: 71, 75.

How are you doing in the development of your doctrinal understanding of The Faith once delivered to the saints?⁹

¹ Attributed to the US Military

² Attributed to Robert Southey (<http://3.ly/qPvh>)

³ Acts 20:29, 30

⁴ Existence originating from and having no source other than itself (<http://3.ly/NVBT>)

⁵ John 3:5-8 & Acts 16:14

⁶ Matt. 16:17 & Galatians 1:16, 17

⁷ Revelation 2:4

⁸ Acts 16:14 & John 3:3 (ἀνωθεν).

⁹ Jude 3