



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 2:18-19 – A CRISIS FACING EVERY BELIEVER!

WYOMING

FEBRUARY 6, 2019

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God's Word confronts us with two ways to live. There is a broad way...spacious, full of worldly pleasures for a time and seems so inviting, but this is passing and leads to destruction. And there is the narrow way...it may appear hard and uninviting because it is the way of God's will and not my own, but that way leads to abundant and abiding life. (Psalm 1, Matthew 7:13-14) John is warning his readers to choose the narrow way, yes with less travelers, but it alone is fulfilling and leads to life and "abiding forever."

I. A CRISIS FACING EVERY BELIEVER! 1 JOHN 2:18-19

(18) "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. (19) They 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, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us."

1 John 2:18-19

You may remember that false teachers were troubling believers in the church. These false teachers believed that God was indifferent to sin, (1 John 1:5-10) and they behaved with reckless disregard for His commandments. (1 John 2:3-6) John will again warn about these antichrists, those who are against Jesus Christ and their heretical teaching in this next section as he writes out of a deep concern for the welfare of the church.² For there is a crisis that faces every believer, with false teachers who deny that Jesus is the Son of God Who came in the flesh to save our souls. If you deny that, you cannot be saved.

A. "IT IS THE LAST HOUR..." - 1 JOHN 2:18

One of Satan's tactics in his futile quest is to infiltrate Christ's church with "angels of light". (2 Corinthians 11:14) Because he is "passing away" (1 John 2:17), Satan seeks to do as much destruction as possible before Christ returns. So John warns believers to be on guard about these "antichrists".

John writes to believers living in the "last hour". (1 John 2:18) The New Testament clarifies what the "last hour" is. It is the time between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. It was the time John lived in and the time we are presently living in. It is the present age waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus said false christs and false prophets would be a sign of this present age. (Matthew 24:24) John calls these false teachers "antichrists". In fact, John says these "antichrists" manifest the same unbelief of the "antichrist" who is to come, that the church has been warned about. They are against Christ and oppose Him in every way.

Only John, in his letters, uses the term "antichrist" but this concept is used throughout Scripture. These false teachers are against Christ. Anyone who opposes Christ or falsely represents Him is anti-christ. 1 John 4:3 says, "and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist..." This is so critical because the consequences of a wrong view of Jesus Christ are eternal.³

Now John refers first to "antichrist", who is coming in 1 John 2:19. The believers had been taught about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the Antichrist from Daniel's teaching in chapters 7-8, 9:26-27 and chapter 11. The Antichrist will be an imposing figure with superior intellect and oratory skills with a military force behind him. He ultimately becomes the leader of the entire world, allies with Israel, then turns against Israel and occupies the throne of the rebuilt Temple and blasphemes God by sacrificing a pig on the altar of God and presents himself as God. (Revelation 13:17, Zechariah 11:16-17) He is the coming powerful and diabolical "beast" of Revelation 13:1-10 and the "man of lawlessness" from 2 Thessalonians 2:3. But Jesus Christ destroys the Antichrist in the end. In fact, Jesus refers to this same Antichrist in Matthew 24:15-25.⁴

So John writes to expose these antichrists and their heretical teaching. They manifest and show the same unbelief of the "antichrist" who is to come and the church has been warned about. Because of their denial of Christ, yet claim to be a Christian, every true believer must be on guard. No one can assume one is a true believer if they don't believe in Jesus Christ and deny His Deity.

B. "THEY WERE NOT OF US..." - 1 JOHN 2:19

John describes these false teachers, "antichrists", as once being a part of the church, giving the impression of being Christians but they abandoned the fellowship of the church. John points out that "they went out from us, but they were never really of us". (1 John 2:19) They were never true believers. They were never really a part of the body of Christ. John goes on to say, "for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us..." (1 John 2:19) Now obviously what John is not talking about is those true Christians who fall, or change churches or drift away for a time. No John is talking about those who had a profession without a true confession of faith. Outwardly they were members of the church, but inwardly they never shared a true conversion...they were never Christians at all and so eventually

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they departed. In the New Testament, to remain is to continue and continuance is the test of reality, of a true belief in Jesus Christ. That is what John is talking about.

Jesus warns in Matthew 24:13 that only the ones who endure to the end will be saved. Colossians 1:23 says we are reconciled to Christ, saved, “*if indeed you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard...*” John is saying that continuance in the faith is the test of genuine faith.

Know that genuine believers in Jesus Christ need not fear some fatal influence might cause them to lose their salvation. Genuine believers cannot fall away and will stay true to the faith. They will persevere to the end because we are in the hands of the Good Shepherd. As a believer in Christ, I am His. He is the Good Shepherd and will not lose one of His sheep. We are secure in Christ. (John 10:27-30, Philippians 1:6, Jude 24-25) Those who defect, reveal the true condition of their heart.⁵ Their departure revealed their true nature. They were never Christians at all. They were counterfeit and belonged to another camp.

In fact, John says that these antichrists, false teachers with their false religions, they went out “*in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.*” (1 John 2:19) The purpose clause, “*in order*”, makes it clear that God uses their departure to reveal the true nature of their hearts. Between their hypothetical continuance and their actual departure, their false faith demonstrates the truth about their profession. In fact, John says their departure was decisive proof “*they were not of us*”.⁶ (1 John 2:19) By contrast, the distinguishing mark of a true believer is that they continue to the end.

John wrote in his Gospel these comforting words for those who know Jesus Christ personally, “*I am the good Shepherd and I*

know My own, and My own know Me...My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me, and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:14, 27-30)

Though Satan is a defeated foe and his time is passing, he still roars. We must beware and guard against the lies and false teaching from those who oppose Jesus Christ. Hypocrisy and heresy defined the antichrist teachers as they crept into the church with their destructive teaching. That’s why John writes.

The mark of a true believer is that they continue to the end, not because of anything in themselves, but because they know the true and living Christ and remain in communion, in fellowship, in a shared life with Him eternally because He is the keeper of their souls. In the verses that follow, John will

What about you? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? It is only through Him that you can...that you must be saved! (Acts 4:12) A false confession will never work. God knows your heart. He sees the condition of your soul. The one who does the will of God, who savingly trusts Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and knows Him, the one who obeys God from the heart has nothing to fear. That one will abide forever!

¹ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 24.

² Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 25-26.

³ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 96.

⁴ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 96.

⁵ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 99.

⁶ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg. 111.