

“Christians and Antichrists”

September 25, 2011

Text: 1 John2:18-21

Pablo Escobar was often called “the world’s greatest outlaw.”

He was the ruthless founder of Colombia’s notorious Medellin drug cartel & smuggled up to 15 tons of cocaine/day into the U.S.

That equaled \$½ billion/day making him the seventh richest man in the world.

He spent \$2500/month on rubber bands just to bundle up his incoming cash so that it could be stored in warehouses.

His policy in dealing with government officials was “*plata o plomo*” (a silver bribe or a lead bullet).

He had hundreds of policemen and state officials murdered.

He bribed countless others—especially judges, thus undermining the entire Colombian legal system, robbing the country of justice.

In 1 presidential election, he had 3 of the candidates assassinated.

Why would the people of Colombia put up with this?

Because Pablo created public complacency by donating millions of dollars to build houses/hospitals, sports-complexes/schools/Catholic-churches.

The poor came to view him as a Robin Hood figure.

In 1 Jn 2:18-21, the Apostle John encourages Xns to guard against their own complacency towards worldliness.

As we saw last Sunday, John has just told his readers=>

“Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him”
(1 Jn 2:15).

This is one of the most important texts in 1st John.

If you weren't here last Sunday, please get a CD of the message and listen to it.

As we saw last time, the “world” is a Satanic system of evil, which functions as a spiritual kingdom, ruled by the devil.

He designed it as a tool with which to oppose God, and it exploits man's weakness through the lust of his flesh, the lust of his eyes, and his boastful pride of life.

Using this tool, Satan will ultimately impose a far worse outlaw on mankind than Pablo=> the Antichrist.

In today's text John will explain why it's crucial for Xns to guard their hearts against love for the world, especially those who are young in the faith=> There are antichrists in the world even now, waiting like spiritual outlaws to rob them of their faith.

In 1 Jn 4:3, John will write=> *“Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the **spirit** of the **antichrist**, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the **world**.”*

Then John will go on to encourage these spiritual “children”

(1 Jn 4:4-5)=> *“You are from God, little children, and have overcome them [antichrist spirits in the world]; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. / They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, & the world listens to them.”*

As we saw last time, rather than telling us to avoid the world,

Jesus has sent us into the world to testify of Him, bringing light into their darkness.

But that doesn't mean it's not a spiritually dangerous place.

It's full of false teachers with the spirit of antichrist.

John's readers were prob. familiar w/ the concept of the antichrist, because Daniel had prophesied his coming long before.

Dan 11:36=> *“The king [a reference to Antichrist] will do as he pleases, & he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation [Tribulation] is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.”*

In verse 44, Daniel went on to write=> *“He will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many.”*

Daniel's 1st mention of Antichrist is found in Daniel 7:7-8, where

Antichrist appears in Daniel's vision as a *“little horn.”*

Our most impressive image of Antichrist is in Rev 13:1-10,

where he is portrayed as *“a beast coming out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names”* (vs 1).

In Mt 24:15, Jesus too spoke of the antichrist, calling him=>

“The ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken

of through Daniel the prophet” [in Dan 9:27].

X said that when this evil individual stands in the Holy Place (of the Temple), those in Judea should flee to the mountains right away, not even taking time to go back home for their coats.

In 2 Thes 2, Paul had also written about the antichrist, saying that,

*“[The day of the Lord] will not come unless the apostasy comes first, & the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the **son of destruction**, / who opposes & exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2:3-4).*

John’s readers prob. thought of Antichrist as a very evil man who would come someday—but not in their lifetime.

He would be a problem for future Xns—but not for them.

I.e., they thought of Antichrist just as most Xns do today.

To wake young/naive believers out of their complacency, John is going to tell them=> *“Even **now** many antichrists have arisen.”*

John is going to warn his readers, that in view of the threat posed by the antichrists already in the world, they must guard themselves against worldliness for 2 reasons...

1) Because of who the antichrists are

2) Because of who they themselves are, as Christians.

*** Reason #1 for Guarding Yourselves Against Worldliness=>**

Because of Who Antichrists Are

[1 John 2:18a]=> “*Children, it is the last hour;*”

John is addressing spiritual “*children*” here.

You’ll remember that in verses 12-14, he divided Xns into 3 groups, based on their individual maturity=>

- * *Children* of the faith—who enjoy their newfound forgiveness from sin, but who are spiritually immature and vulnerable to Satan’s attacks and temptations.
- * *Young men* of the faith—who have learned to overcome the evil one by becoming strong in the Word of God.
- * *Fathers* of the faith—whose whole lives have come to revolve around their intimate/growing knowledge of God, the preoccupation of their thought-life.

John now turns to the especially vulnerable ones—the spiritual “children”—to shake them out of any lethargy or complacency they may feel, by warning them=> “*It is the last hour.*”

He says, “We know it’s the last hour because so many antichrists have arisen.”

“*Last hour*” is an eschatological term like “last days,” “last times,” and “end times”—which means it pertains to the final events of history in God’s redemptive plan.

Scripture divides that history into 2 parts=> the “present evil age” (Gal 1:4) and “the age to come.”

E.g. Eph 1:21 says X has been seated at God’s right hand in

heaven=> *“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in **this age**, but also in the **one to come**.”*

* *“The age to come”* is the Millennial Kingdom, when Isa 9 says all world government will rest on X’s shoulders=>

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore” (Isa 9:6-7).

Isa 11:6 says that during the Millennium=> *“The wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the kid, & the calf & the young lion and the fatling together; & a little boy will lead them.”*

Those will be wonderful times, when men will=>

Hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war” (Isa 2:4).

* But for now, we live in the present evil age, & at the end of that age.

We live in what the Bible calls “the last days” of that age.

“The last days/times” extend from X’s 1st Coming to His 2nd Coming.

E.g. 1 Pet 1:20 says X *“has appeared in these **last times**.”*

But even during these “last times,” the “age to come” has already begun to dawn in the hearts of those redeemed/regenerated thru faith in X.

That's why we read in 1 Jn 2:17 that "*the world is passing away,*" and in 1 Jn 2:8 that "*the darkness [of the world] is passing away.*"

Wanting to impress upon his readers just how far along things have progressed in God's redemptive plan, John even says that this is the "last hour" of these "last days."

He says it twice in verse 18 to make sure they get the point, there's not much time left.

I.e., this is no time for Xns to dabble in worldliness, because from God's perspective (w/ whom a thousand years is as a day and a day is as a thousand years [II Pet 3:8]), we are in the last hour.

Xns are always to be ready for X's coming, to rapture them out of this world, & take them to their home in heaven.

We are always to live our lives prepared for X's coming today.

John's main concern is that some of his readers (esp. those new in the faith) have become complacent/distracted/infatuated w/ the world, & that they're no longer anticipating X's return (they no longer love His appearing, they love the world).

John tells his readers that we know this is the last hour

because there are many antichrists in the world already.

[Verse 18b]=> "*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.*"

The name “*antichrist*” indicates that this evil character will oppose Christ Jesus, attacking His claim to be X, the Son of God.

1 Jn 2:22=> “*Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the **antichrist**.*”

One of the main characteristics of antichrists is that they attack X, by lying about who He is.

But earlier we also saw another side of Antichrist in II Thes 2:4, that he “*exalts himself*” over every other god, including the true God, whom we worship/serve.

In Gk, the “anti” in Antichrist can mean “instead of” or “in place of.”

So the Antichrist will oppose X, but he will also try to take X’s place as the object of man’s worship (to be thought of as X, instead of Jesus, who is the true X).

And with Satan’s help, he will almost pull it off.

In Mk 13, X was describing the Tribulation when He said=>

‘If anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, He is there’; do not believe him; / for false Christs [Antichrist will be the ultimate false X] and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray’
(Mk 13:21-22).

It’s not possible to mislead the elect because they

are=> “*protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (I Pet 1:5).

The Bible describes the Antichrist as an intimidating, intellectually superior person—a political, military, and economic genius who will appear during the Tribulation. He will become the leader of a one-world government. He'll make a pact to protect Israel, then renege on it and turn against them midway through the 7 year term of that agreement. He'll place an image of himself in the newly reconstructed Temple & require everyone on earth to worship it, and to take his mark (666). Those who refuse, because of their faithfulness to Jesus X, will be destroyed.

Complacent Xns might say, “The Antichrist will be a really bad person, but I’m not worried—he’s not here yet!”

John’s answer=> “Many such antichrists have already arisen.

“It’s time for you children-in-the-faith to stop toying with the world, get serious about your Xnity, & grow into spiritual young men who can overcome the evil one.”

Q: Who are these “*many antichrists who have already arisen*”?

A: All those who deny either X’s divine-nature/human-nature today.

They are forerunners of the ultimate Antichrist, constantly attacking/distorting the truth about who Jesus is.

* E.g. Mormon doctrine teaches Jesus is a created being, a firstborn spirit-child of his Heavenly-Father/Mother.

* According to Jehovah's Witnesses, X was the 1st being created by God, and was known as Michael the archangel.

* According to Christian Science doctrine, X is the perfect idea of Spirit/Truth/Life/Love who inhabited a man named Jesus, enabling Jesus to suffer/die, w/o X doing so.

1 Jn 4:3=> *“Every **spirit** that does not confess Jesus is not from God; & this is the **spirit** of the **antichrist**, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the **world**.”*

So antichrist is a spirit/principle a/w/a a specific person and persons.

All these false religions are animated by an antichrist spirit, that will be consummated in the final Antichrist.

He will come during the Tribulation, and the false doctrine he'll teach will be pure humanism.

Whereas the incarnation of X showed man's destiny when he forms a union with God through faith in X, Antichrist will claim man himself is divine, apart from God, when he fulfills his human potential.

And he will offer himself (w/ his miraculous, Satanic powers) as an illustration of that principle.

Having explained who the antichrists are, John now informs us where they came from=> the church (the visible church, not the true [invisible] Church).

[Verse 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.”

All these false religions are heretical perversions of true Xn doctrine, found in the true Church.

They are the fulfillment of Paul’s prophecy in Acts 20=>

“From among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (20:29-30).

Antichrists are identifiable because they come into churches, or are raised up in churches, and then they leave.

For awhile, they are accepted as real believers because they appear to be.

But then they leave, because they were never really part of us.

They may disagree in a variety of areas doctrinally, but the doctrine of X will always be somehow involved.

* It may be an inability to accept the truth that X is both fully God & fully man, because the Spirit hasn’t convinced them of that.

* It may be that the individual refuses to humble himself before X as Lord, by obeying His Word.

2 Pet 2:1=> *“There will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even **denying the Master** [by their disobedience] who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.”*

* It may be simple indifference toward spiritual truth in general (including Christology) that causes them to leave.

Regardless of their own reasons for leaving, ultimately they leave because God drives them out, for His own purpose=> (vs 19) “...*in order that it **might be shown** [phaneroo—revealed or demonstrated] that they all, are **not of us.**”*

In the parable of the vine/branches, Jesus says (Jn 15:2)=> “*Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, **He takes away.**”*

Though the fruitless branches choose to leave, of their own accord, God’s sovereign purpose in it all is to reveal who is/isn’t for-real, so that those who remain will know who not to believe/follow.

In I Cor 11:19, Paul writes=> “*There must also be factions among you, in order that those who are **approved** may have become **evident** among you.*”

Thus God neutralizes the potential negative influence of present-day antichrists by removing them from the Church, thus purifying the Church.

If you follow upon their cases, and ask them why they left...

- * Either they won’t be able to give you a clear/coherent answer,
- * Or they’ll give you an answer that’s not really true,
- * Or their answer will demonstrate that they really believe in their own opinion, not in biblical truth.

**Although the primary group being described in verse 19 is
false teachers, this principle applies to all professed Xns.**

Those whose faith is genuine remain in the Church;

Those whose faith is not genuine, eventually leave.

Or as John says it=> *“if they had been of us, they would
have remained with us.”*

The world cannot draw genuine believers away from the
Church’s worship/fellowship on a regular basis with work,
education, recreation, or any of its other demands on their
time.

This confirms the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

Those who are born again won’t leave the Xn faith/Church.

Heb 3:14=> *“We have become partakers of Christ, if
we **hold fast** the beginning of our assurance
firm until the end.”*

*** Reason #2 for Guarding Yourselves Against Worldliness=>**

Because of Who You Xns Are

**Now John contrasts Xns’ knowledge-of/loyalty-to the Truth
with the worldly deceptions of present-day antichrists.**

Xns know the truth because they have been anointed w/ the H.S.

[Verse 20]=> *“But you [emphatic—you, unlike the antichrists]
have an **anointing** from the Holy One, and you all know.”*

Not just “some of you know,” but “*you **all know***” the truth.

**Israel’s priests/kings were anointed with oil to symbolize
God’s having consecrated them to a holy task.**

The oil itself symbolized the H.S., who would empower them to fulfill their calling.

E.g. in I Sam 16:13 we read of David=> *“Then Samuel took the horn of oil and **anointed** him in the midst of his brothers; and the **Spirit** of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.”*

When X was baptized in the Jordon, He too was anointed with the H.S.

In Acts 10:38, Peter preached=> *“You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God **anointed** Him with the **Holy Spirit** and with **power**, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.”*

The word “*Christ*” itself means “Anointed One.”

But John is saying to Xns (particularly “*children of the faith*”) that we too are anointed—consecrated to God’s service and empowered/gifted to fulfill His purpose for our lives.

I Pet 2:9 refers to us as “*a royal priesthood.*”

So our anointing was a consecration to the priesthood of all believers.

I.e., if you a born-again Xn, you are a priest—an anointed priest.

In 1 Jn 2:27, John will say this about our anointing=>

*“The **anointing** which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but... His **anointing teaches** you about all things, and is true and is not a lie.”*

What kind of anointing is it that can teach us all things?

The anointing of the H.S., whom Acts 2:33 says X has received from the Father and poured out on us Xns, like oil.

We must guard against worldliness because of who we are=>

God's anointed/consecrated/empowered ones—His priests.

This truth holds has 2 implications=>

1) We priests have no business defiling/staining ourselves w/ things of the world.

We have been anointed by “*the Holy One.*”

Commentators debate whether this refers to X/the-Father, since Scripture calls both “*the Holy One.*”

But the point John is making is that the “*Holy One*” is *holy* so we must be holy too—not worldly.

2) We don't need to be deceived by this world's antichrists, but should even be engaged in helping counter their deceptions, because we have the H.S. right w/i us, as our Teacher.

John says, “*you all know,*” using a word that refers to knowing/knowledge that is innate/settled in our minds, not to new understanding acquired through additional learning.

If you're a believer, you have known the basic truth about X, that saves your soul, since the first moment of your salvation.

II Cor 4:6 says God has shone in every Xn's heart=>

“*to give the light of the knowledge of the glory*”

of God in the face of Christ.”

We can be confident of the Truth we know, & should grow in that knowledge, becoming spiritually stronger.

* Children of the faith should grow into strong young men who can overcome antichrists with the Word, and help protect other spiritual children.

* Young men should grow into spiritual fathers, fixated on the Word, constantly discovering deeper truths about X, *“in whom are hidden all the **treasures of wisdom and knowledge**”* (Col 2:3).

[Verse 21]=> *“I 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.”*

John’s readers were like spiritual children, but they didn’t need to hear new truth about the things they didn’t yet know.

They just needed John to confirm what they already knew, and to encourage them to actively/decisively-apply it, by detecting/countering/refuting false teachers—present-day antichrists.

John wrote, knowing that his readers’ truth-Teacher was the H.S., so they could recognize the Truth when they heard it, because He would confirm it to their hearts.

1 Cor 2:12=> *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might **know the things freely given to us by God.**”*

John's readers, being Xns who were taught by H.S., would also understand the exclusivity of biblical truth.

They would understand that no lie is of the truth, so there is no nebulous grey area between truth/error in which antichrists are free to get creative with the Truth.

John adds=> “No lie is of the truth.”

Truth/falsehood are absolutely irreconcilable.

The truth is wholly true & it is self-consistent at all points.

Jn 16:13 says the H.S. guides us into “*all truth*” not “some truth, some error.”

If something isn't true in any part, it's from the father of lies, because God is wholly true.

Satan makes his living by inserting into Xn doctrine tiny lies that are so small most people don't notice them.

These tiny lies become like wedges that ultimately open up enormous gaps in our theology, which false teachers run through to create their heresies.

As we have seen, those gaps always involve lies/distortions about Jesus X, which result in false doctrines of salvation.

Those who teach heresy don't have the divine anointing of the H.S.

They have no share in divine truth, & they reject the truth.

1 Cor 2:14=> “*A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand*”

them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

They are antichrists, & Xns should recognize them as such.

Ironically, the world accuses us of ignoring its scientific “truths” such as how life, or the universe were created apart from a Creator.

We say with Jesus (Jn 17:17)=> *“Thy **word** is truth.”*

We may not yet be able to fully answer all their questions about these things scientifically, but we trust God’s Word & wait on the Lord, holding those questions in abeyance until He answers them.

Meanwhile, we have found in Jesus *“the way, and the **truth**, and the life”* (Jn 14:6).

The only Truth that can save our eternal souls, and give us eternal life.

“Christians and Antichrists”
September 25, 2011

Text: 1 John 2:18-21

1. In 1 John 2:18-21 the Apostle John encourages Christians to guard against their own complaisance towards [24 worldliness].

I Jn 2:15; 4:3, 4-5

2. John’s readers were probably familiar with the concept of the [24 antichrist], because Daniel had prophesied his coming.

Dan 11:36, 44; 7:7-8; Rev 13:1; Mt 24:15; Dan 9:27; II Thes 2:3-4

3. **John is going to warn his readers that in view of the threat posed by the antichrists already in the world, they must guard themselves against [24 worldliness] for two reasons...**

*** Guard Against Worldliness Because of Who the Antichrists Are**
[1 John 2:18a]

4. Scripture divides history into “present [10 evil] age” and “the age to come.”

Gal 1:4; Eph 1:21; Isa 9:6-7; 11:6; 2:4

5. We live in the present evil age in what the Bible calls “the last days”; the “last days” (or times) extend from [18 Christ’s] First Coming to His Second Coming.

I Pet 1:20; I Jn 2:17, 8; II Pet 3:8

6. We know this is the last hour because there are many [24 antichrists] in the world.

[Verse 18b]

I Jn 2:22; II Thes 2:4; Mk 13:21-22

7. Who are these “*many antichrists who have arisen*”? All those who [10 deny] either Christ’s divine nature or His human nature.

I Jn 4:3

[Verse 19]

Acts 20:29-30

8. Antichrists come into churches, and then they leave... because they were [12 never] really part of us.

II Pet 2:1; Jn 15:2; I Cor 11:19

9. Those whose faith is genuine remain in the Church; those whose faith is [8 not] genuine eventually leave.

Heb 3:14

*** Guard Against Worldliness Because of Who You Christians Are**

[Verse 20]

I Sam 16:13; Acts 10:38

10. John is saying Christians too are anointed—consecrated to God’s service and empowered and gifted to fulfill [8 His] purpose.

I Jn 2:27; Acts 2:33

This truth holds two implications...

*11. We have no business staining ourselves with things of the [12 world].

*12. We don’t need to be deceived by this world’s antichrists but should counter their deceptions because we have the Holy Spirit as our [16 Teacher].

II Cor 4:6; Col 2:3

[Verse 21]

I Cor 2:12

13. John adds, “*No lie is of the truth*”; truth and falsehood are absolutely [26 irreconcilable].

Jn 16:13; I Cor 2:14; Jn 17:17

14. We have found in [12 Jesus]... the only Truth that can save our eternal souls.

Jn 14:6