

1st John 2:18-20: Antichrists

Children, 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. 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*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

The Last Hour

John uses the phrase last hour while other New Testament authors use the phrase “last days” (2 Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 1:2) or “last time” (1 Peter 1:5, 20; 2 Peter 3:3; Jude 1:18). These terms appear to be synonymous and John’s use of the term indicates how precious little time remains before Christ’s return. While the exact time of Christ’s return is unknown specifically by all but the Father we do know that the delay is a gracious delay as the Father wishes to see all saved (1 Timothy 2:4). John points out that due to the rise of antichrists the last hour is evident.

The Antichrist & The Antichrists

John is the one who uses the term Antichrist in the New Testament (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3, 2 John 1:7). He states here that they have heard which is likely in reference to Daniel 7:8 & 21 and the prophecies of the wicked one who will rise up against the saints. Additionally Christ stated in John 15:18 that the world hates Him and they will hate His followers. John gives us some specific descriptions of the quality of the antichrist as well as specifying to us here that there are many who would be antichrists by way of life; even if they are not the one prophesied they carry out the same types of actions.

Characteristics of the Antichrist in John’s Letters

- Liar & Deceiver (1 John 2:22; 2 John 1:7)
- Denies Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22, 4:3)
- Is a life that is already in the world (1 John 4:3)

While the prophecies of the antichrist as one specific person in history are clear from the Old Testament, and John affirms this in this verse, the actual spirit of hatred for who Christ was, and is, and will be (within the earthly space-time continuum) spreads to a generation (Luke 17:25, Matthew 24:5,11).

The Exodus of the Antichrists

The false believers who left the fellowship of the believers were those who were initially intrigued by the message of the gospel and the Messiah described, but were not following Christ, but instead their own passions. In a culture of Judaism, mystery religions, spirituality and mysticism the gospel would stand out and draw people to it, but those who did not become identified with Christ in His death, burial,

resurrection, ascension & seating would be driven out as the truth of Christian doctrine would become an offensive aroma.

Eternal Security

There needs to be pointed out the contrast between those who never believed and those who believe and walk away into fleshly behavior. Since identification is permanent, resulting in the believer being seated in the heavenlies positionally, there is a doctrinal impossibility of the believer losing their salvation. Paul outlines this in several places (examples: 1 Cor. 3:15, I Cor. 5:5) and John implies this here as well.

An Anointing

John tells the believers that they have an anointing, which was a phrase used within the Old Testament to signify God's having chosen someone (Exodus 28:41; 1 Samuel 15:1; 1 Samuel 16:3, 12). While there was a regular practice of anointing ones self with oil for social presentation purposes (Ruth 3:3), this is not that context. John is pointing out the chosen nature of the believer and that the choosing was God's and the choosing was permanent. Erroneous uses today in charismatic theology include not questioning pastors or elders because they are "God's anointed" but this is a misapplication of David's having preserved Saul's life because God would end Saul's rule and not because elders within the body should not be evaluated for qualities that are described in 1 Timothy 3.

But Y'all Know

The result of this anointing is that the believers know what is true. There are several words for "know" in the Greek and this one is οἶδα which implies a knowledge borne by perception. There is γινώσκω in the Greek as well, but that implies relationship as in I Corinthians 8:3 where God knows the believer, but this particular passage in 1 John is an implication of observation and understanding of a truth.

Conclusion

The believers who were reading this would see that John was again drawing the first concepts of fellowship that the book started with. The antichrists had no fellowship, and John will continue to outline what this means for the believers. He also encourages them with the concept of eternal security and will draw them to a closer walk with the Lord as we move through this epistle. While the spirit of the antichrist would bring turmoil, tribulation and suffering John reminds them of the eternal value of their relationship with the Father through Jesus through the Holy Spirit.