

SERIES: SERIES: Authentic Christian Community / 1 John, wk 2

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I think you can pretty much count on the fact, that anything in this world that has great value is going to be copied, imitated, faked, and counterfeited. There's probably nothing in this world that has greater value, than God's offer to receive the forgiveness of our sins, in a relationship with Him now and forever. Therefore, it would be fair to assume nothing in this world is more counterfeited than that offer. If you have a Bible, turn with us to 1 John, Chapter 2.

We've been talking about community. We learned that the essence of community is entering into the life that has defined God forever — to *dance with God*. But to dance with God — to dance with Jesus — you must dance *in the light*, because Jesus only dances in the light, and light exposes our *stuff*. It exposes our *sin*; it exposes our *rats*, and we must deal with our stuff, in order to stay in the light. We learned that when we experience God's forgiveness — when the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin — we notice there are others with us in the light who have been so cleansed, and we invite them to join us, as we dance with Jesus. That is the essence of authentic Christian community.

If we're going to *dance* with Jesus, then He requires that we *love* like Jesus, so we have to reorient our lives. Rather than the default setting — which is to be selfish every day — we reorient our lives to think of others as more important than ourselves — to give ourselves away. So the necessary ingredients for community are *light*, are *love* and, we're going to talk about *truth*.

We pick it up in Chapter 2, Verse 18:

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.

(*NASB, 1 John
2:18)

He refers to them as **children** and, as we talked about, there are two different Greek words for children. One is just talking about the fact that we're all family, because we've all been born from the same spiritual parent - from Jesus Himself. That's the word used in Chapter 2, Verse 1, and that's the term that's used off and on throughout his letter. We were introduced to a different term that carries more the idea of a new believer — somebody that isn't yet spiritually mature and is at risk. This word for children is *that* word.

I think the train of thought is: those who are *spiritually mature*, those who are *growing* Christians, and those who are *new believers*. And really, the encouragement to the mature and the growing Christians, was to listen to what John has to say, because he's concerned about the false teachers, and he's mostly concerned that the false teachers will lure the new believers away. They're the most vulnerable. After telling the believers in the church to do that, he now turns

around and writes directly to those new believers — to those that are the most vulnerable to the ramblings of false teachers. And so this section is directed right at them.

He talks about the concern of **antichrist** or *antichrists*. There is a singular and there's a plural. Now what does he mean by that? This is a term that's unique to John; he's the only one in the Bible that uses this term. And basically, if you take the two Greek words that make up this word, it means to stand *against* Christ or *instead of* Christ. I think the best way to think of it is, it is someone who is *against Christ*, but the strategy to do that is to offer something *instead of Christ* — in other words something that is counterfeit, something that comes up alongside of that which is true, and looks like it's true, but it's actually a counterfeit. That's the best way to stand against Christ. That's the best way to confuse people and to lure them astray.

Now who is the *antichrist* (singular)? It depends a little bit what your End Times theology is, or what your eschatology is, but I think everyone would agree, at the end of the day, *the* antichrist is the evil one — it's Satan himself. That makes the most sense in this text, because he just warned them of the evil one. He told them that they need to overcome the evil one. He just talked about the evil one as the architect of the world's system intended to destroy. He's the ultimate antichrist. Jesus said that he's a liar and a deceiver. When Paul writes to the Corinthians, he says, "*He disguises himself. The evil one disguises himself as an angel of light.*" In other words, he's a counterfeiter. He presents something that is *other than* what it is.

Now if you go back and look at that text in 2 Corinthians, when Paul refers to him as *disguising himself as an angel of light*, there's no question the context is referring to religion. Therefore, what he is saying is, how he operates as an angel — disguising himself as an angel of light — is he takes a religious system and he puts it up alongside the true story, in order to confuse people, and deceive them, and lead them astray. So I think that's the ultimate antichrist, and the ultimate battle is yet in the future, and that's how it's worded in the text. But in the meantime, he sends his foot-soldiers. Those are the antichrists (plural) — the false teachers that are intended to lead people astray and, interestingly enough, that was a problem two thousand years ago, and it's a problem today. John says that's always going to be a problem in this *last hour*.

Now what does he mean by **last hour**? This is another phrase that's unique to John. He's the only one that uses this phrase. Paul uses a similar phrase. He refers to the *last days*. People will often say, "You know, do you think we're in the last days?" My answer is always, "Absolutely!" because according to the New Testament, from the ascension of Christ until the return of Christ, these are the last days. Yes, we're in them. We've been in them almost two thousand years, and we'll be in them until the return of Christ. That may be tomorrow. That may be a hundred years from now. That may be a thousand years from now. But this time in history is referred to as the last hour or the last days.

Now the best way to understand it, is to realize that there has been this ongoing story of God all the way back to the beginning — from the Garden of Eden onward. In Genesis, Chapter 3, since sin entered into the picture, God made a promise that He would one day send a Redeemer — a Savior — that would make it possible for sinful people to make it back to Paradise forever. So the story of history has been God's unfolding story, giving images and pictures that ultimately lead to the coming of the Messiah. So virtually all history has been looking forward to that moment in time. But that time has passed — the Messiah has come. Jesus perfectly fulfilled God's promise and through his death, burial, and resurrection, provides salvation to those who, by faith, will receive it. From the ascension of Christ to His return, what's unique about this time in history is, this is the only time in human history where we're not looking forward to the

fulfillment of the promise, but rather proclaiming the message that the promise has been fulfilled. So the last chapter of the story *is* this chapter, and the mandate is to proclaim the message that the Messiah has come. And then Jesus returns, has His last battle; there's the final judgment, and He ushers in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

So he [John] says what will define this chapter is antichrist — false teachers. We need to know that.

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*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

As is very common, the false teachers came from within. The closer the counterfeit is to the original, the more deceptive it is and the more dangerous it is. And when the false teachers come from within, they are always more dangerous than those who come from without. He is saying they were with us, but they weren't really one of us. In other words, they were a part of our group, but they never really believed. They never really bought into the message of Jesus. And so the more we came together in community, the more it became obvious, "Hey, you don't fit here. You don't believe what we believe. You don't affirm the same truth that we affirm." Therefore, *they went out*.

Now that's interesting to think about. In essence, what John is saying is, what exposed the false teachers was community, that in community it became obvious, "*Hey, you don't fit here. You don't really come into the light. You don't really love like Jesus. You don't really believe the same things.*" And they were exposed and left.

We live in a world that devalues truth, because we believe that truth divides, and so we have to diminish truth. We have to kind of make it secondary, so that we can all come together and get along. What John is saying is the polar opposite of that. Actually what brings us together — what actually defines us as a community — *is* truth. So you might say that truth is necessary for true community, but true community is necessary to guard the truth. Another way of saying that is, "Show me a church that doesn't value community, and I'll show you a church that is vulnerable to false teachers." So he says to them that the false teachers have *gone out*.

Verse 20:

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 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. (Vs. 20-21)

He says **...you have an anointing**. Now the language isn't *you have been anointed*, where it's emphasizing the process. It's emphasizing what they received — the substance of the anointing. Now this word *anointing* is one of those terms that preachers throw out a lot, and it often gets very confusing. "*What are you talking about?*" There's absolutely no question in John's letter,

in John's mind, he's referring to the Holy Spirit. If you go back and you read John's Gospel, he uses this term a lot and it's always in reference to the Holy Spirit. That's clearly his reference here. He is saying that the Holy One, which would be Jesus Himself, has sent His Spirit to anoint us, to live within us, in order to lead us to truth.

Now remember when John opened his letter he said, *"I'm going to talk to you about stuff that I've heard from Jesus with my own ears. It's stuff I've heard, I've seen, I've touched, I've scrutinized."* When you get to the middle part of John's Gospel, where he's talking about the discussion in the upper room, Jesus said to His disciples, *"I have to go away. But it's to your advantage that I go away because, when I go away, I'm going to send My Spirit and My Spirit will live within you and My Spirit will lead you to all truth."* There's no question that's what John is referring to here. He heard it directly from Jesus Himself that, *"You have the very Spirit of truth within you to lead you to truth, to give you what you need to know the truth."*

Verse 22:

Who 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. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. As 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. (vs. 22-24)

John is identifying **the liar**. The liar is **the one who denies Jesus as the Christ**. Now he's talking specifically about the Gnostics. The Gnostics believed in the concept of a Christ, but they did not believe that Jesus was the Christ. They did not believe that it was possible that God would take on human flesh, because they believed that human flesh was evil — that all matter is evil. Therefore they denied that Jesus is the Christ. And John says, *"When you get the doctrine of Jesus wrong, you have no access to the Father."* That's what he says. *"If you deny the Son, you deny the Father. If you confess the Son, you confess the Father."*

Now it's interesting that this text would come up right at this time, when there is quite a bit of media attention related to what all is going on in the religious world. It's driven by politics. It's driven by political correctness. It's driven by a media agenda. But churches are not political, and churches are not politically correct. According to the truth of God, if you get the doctrine of Jesus wrong, you have no access to God. A Christian church, by its very name, is built on the concept of Christ, and if you don't get your doctrine of Christ correct, you're not a Christian organization. It's important to understand that.

One of the reasons why sometimes truth seems to divide, and truth seems to prohibit community, is because we sometimes don't understand, what the right things are that we need to stand on. A lot of churches are split over lots of things like worship styles, like church government, like eschatology. But there are certain foundational truths that are non-negotiable, that define who we are as a Christian church. Jesus Himself stood before John and said, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Nobody gets to the Father unless they come through me."* John is repeating the same thing. *"If you deny the Son, you have no access to the Father."*

When we talk about the doctrine of Jesus, it's the fundamental doctrine that Jesus was God in the flesh — fully God, fully man - lived a perfect life, ultimately was crucified on a cross in payment for your sin and mine, was buried, and rose again, and offers His salvation

freely to those who receive it by faith. That is the fundamental doctrine of the person and work of Jesus.

Years ago, when I lived in downtown Chicago, my watch broke, and I'll just say that we used to wander through parts of town, where there were lots of watches for sale on the street. I'll just say it that way. So, I didn't have much money. So, we wandered into this neighborhood and sure enough, someone came up on roller skates and had some watches to sell. I bought one that was a Seiko - so it's like the watch brand Seiko, only it had a P in front of it - and it looked beautiful and it wasn't very expensive. So I bought it and it worked great for about a week. I had a friend who was a jeweler, and he opened it up, and after he stopped laughing, informed me that the way the watch was built, it was built to run a week or two and that was it. It looked so good, but not so good on the inside. I found out later that the brand was PSEIKO, with a P, but then they just go back in with a thinner or something. Take out the P and it seemed like a Seiko and that's what I thought and I was deceived. It was a counterfeit Seiko.

Well, that's what John's talking about. He's talking about *antichrist*, not in the sense of someone who is anti-Christ - that would be far too obvious - but someone who is a counterfeit Christ. In other words, it's very deceitful, and we think it's true, but it ends up not being true. I would suggest to you, this is a huge problem in our culture today. Paul describes Satan as the *father of lies* who disguises himself as an *angel of light*. **The Christian Church is not Christian, unless it's founded on the person and work of Christ.** We'll talk more about that tomorrow.