

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

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**Message Title: Living in the Last Hour Pt. 2**

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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.** (NASB 1 John 2:22-24)

John is identifying **the liar**. The liar is **the one who denies Jesus as the Christ**. Now he’s talking specifically about the Gnostics. 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.”*

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.

Notice what he says in Verse 24: **As for you, let that abide in you** (that's one of John's favorite words—to live in you, to take up residency in you) **which you heard from the beginning**. Now this is a really important statement. It's a concept John has thrown out there over and over again — *from the beginning* of the time that they heard it from John; *from the beginning* of the time that John heard it from Jesus; *from the beginning* of time, when the story of God started in the Garden of Eden. It's important to understand that the story of God has been unfolding throughout history — the story that is the story of God's redemption. Sometimes you hear people in the culture talk about Judaism starting with Abraham, and these world religions that preceded that. But the story of God does not start with Abraham. It starts in the Garden of Eden, with Adam and Eve sinning against God, and in Genesis 3:15 — God promising through the seed of a woman he would once again bring life back out of death. The story of history is the story of God's promise, to redeem us from our sins. Alongside of that, all along the way, have been counterfeits, put forth by the evil one who disguises himself as an *angel of light*, to confuse people and to lead them astray. The closer the counterfeit is to the original, the more confusing it is and the more deceptive it is.

Now when we talk about the story of God, we're not talking about religious theory. We're not talking about a bunch of mystical stuff that happened in a cave, that's written in a book. We're talking about real people, real history, real miracles, real events, real prophecies, real fulfilled prophecies — things that can be investigated, things that can be scrutinized, things that can be affirmed. Archaeology can come back and affirm the credibility of God's story, over and over again. History comes back and affirms the credibility of God's story, over and over again. We can document over seventy major prophecies made about the coming of the Messiah, that were perfectly fulfilled in Jesus. We can calculate the odds that that just happened by chance. We can document from history the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus. We can document that there was a massive explosion of Christianity — of people that bought into the concept of a risen Messiah in the First Century, exploding from the very place where those events took place. The New Testament was written well within the lifetime of the eyewitnesses to those events. Again, this is not religious theory. It's not just one of many theories out there. If you're seeking for truth, this can be investigated; it can be scrutinized; it can be affirmed. This is the story of God.

Some time ago, I heard an interview with Richard Dawkins and he was asked the question, "If someday you die and find out that there is a God, what would you say?" He basically quotes Bertrand Russell in saying, "I would say to God, 'Why did you make Yourself so hard to find?'" I don't understand that at all. What if God Himself became a man, and walked on this Earth, and declared over and over and over again, "This is the way. This is the truth. This is the God story. This has always been the God story," and affirmed it with miracles and a resurrection? Why is that so hard to comprehend? Isn't that God doing everything possible to say, "This is my story," in order to separate it from the counterfeit. That's what he means. John says, "*What you've heard from the beginning is the story of God. God Himself spoke it to me in the upper room and I'm speaking it to you.*"

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Verse 25:

**This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.**

John is summing it up and saying, “This is the story of God. He is the Word of Life. He is the One that came to reveal the life that has defined God forever.” It’s a *duration* of life but it’s a *quality* of life. It’s the deepest, richest, most fulfilling life possible. Jesus became a man, in order to declare, “This is God’s story. This is eternal life.”

Verse 26:

**These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As 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.**  
(Vs. 26-27)

Again John loves this word...*abide*—to dwell and to take up residency in. He reminds them that they have this anointing. They have the very Spirit of Jesus Himself within them, again remembering that Jesus doesn’t just tell the truth; He *is* the truth. Just like Jesus isn’t just alive; He *is* life. He is truth itself, and His Spirit is truth itself. His Spirit lives within us, and He is the truth, and He is there to guide us into truth.

Now what John is *not* saying is: “Because of that, no one needs to teach you anything.” John just got done talking to the mature believers, saying, “You need to teach the new believers.” He himself is teaching them in the letter. That’s not what he’s saying, but he is picking up on a term that the Gnostics were using. The Greek mythological religions — mystic religions — basically had this concept of an **anointing**. It was kind of this experience. It was very mystical, and kind of enlightened you to that which is true. So the Gnostics picked up on that and offered this *enlightenment*. Again, the name *Gnostic* means *to know* or *to be in the know*. And what they offered was this enlightenment that would allow the people to really know the secret and to know the mysteries of God. So basically, the appeal was this: “*Hey, we set up our own church just down the block and, if you join our church, we’ll show you how to have this mystical experience that will enlighten you to what’s really true about God.*” What John is saying is, “You don’t need that. You don’t need some other experience. You don’t lack anything. You have the very Spirit of truth within you, to lead you to that which is true. We don’t need a prophet hundreds of years later. We don’t need books written hundreds of years later. We have everything we need, with the revelation of God, and the Spirit of truth within us, to guide us to truth.”

Now it’s interesting that we actually have this GPS within us — the Spirit of truth — to lead us and affirm to us what is true. This explains why the more you look at the evidence — the more you look at God’s Word — the more you look at that which is true, there’s something inside of you that says, “*That’s really true. That’s really true!*” And there’s this building sense of confidence and this sense that, “*I know this is true,*” when an unbeliever is looking at the exact same stuff and saying, “I just don’t think I believe this.” What makes the difference, is that the evil one has blinded the eyes of the unbeliever. But to the believer, He has given us His Spirit of truth that speaks to our heart, our spirit, and says, “This is true,” and so we believe it more and more fervently.

Verse 28:

**Now, little children, abide in Him** (*live in Him, dwell in Him*), **so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.** (Vs. 28-29)

The big problem with the Gnostics, with these false teachers, is that they had constructed a theology to fit their morality. They'd figure out a theological way why it was okay and acceptable to live grossly immoral lives. This is often what separates religious people from the truth of the Gospel. At some point, it's no longer an intellectual problem. It's not a lack of facts on the table. Religion allows you to pursue God on your terms, with you still living your life your way. But the demand of the Gospel is that you surrender to God as God, and surrender your life to Him, and choose to live life God's way — and that's often the great divide. It isn't an intellectual problem. It becomes a problem of whether I'm going to surrender to God, or whether I'm going to be my own god — and religion grants you that option.

What John is saying, is that if we're going to have credibility, if we're going to say that we have found the truth, if we're going to say that we dance with Jesus in the light, if we're going to say that we love like Jesus, then our lives should reflect that truth. And if He is righteous, then our lives should be righteous. There should be something within our lives that says: "These people found the truth. They have the joy. They have the hope. They have the purpose. They have the significance. They choose to live life God's way, as evidence that they have genuinely found that which is true." What confuses people, is when we say we believe this, but we don't live like it. Then they're confused. They don't understand how those two things fit together. And that's what John is saying. The Gnostics clearly don't believe — their lifestyles give evidence of that. If we believe, then it should *seem* like we believe. There should be an evidence in the way that we live our lives. The effect of that is then: we abide in the truth, so that when Jesus returns, we don't have to shrink back in shame, but rather we confidently celebrate the return of Christ. If, rather than dancing in the light, we choose to pull back into the darkness, and somehow justify our sin, or we're deceived, or we've made up our own doctrine, in order to allow ourselves to live our lives our own ways, when Jesus returns, His light will expose the darkness, and those in the darkness will be exposed for who they are.

Now exactly how that will work I don't know. I find this to be very similar to the discussion about rewards. God talks about them. We should take them seriously. I think they mostly have to do with motive, but I don't exactly understand how that's going to work. In the same way, I don't really understand how it's going to work when He comes back, but clearly there will be those who will pull back in shame, because of how they have lived their lives, resulting from things they believed that weren't true, versus those who abide in the truth, and believe that God tells the truth, and choose to dance in the light, and choose to love like Jesus, and choose to embrace the truth, and live life God's way. **In order to experience authentic Christian community, there must be *light*; there must be *love* and there must be *truth*.**

*Our Father, we're thankful that You love us and You tell us the truth. Lord, You've given us Your Spirit, the very Spirit of truth, and He lives within us, to guide us to that which is true. Lord, I pray that we would be sensitive to the voice of the Spirit, that we would be aware of the deceivers around us, and Lord, that we would take our stand on that which is true. Lord, I pray for those, who perhaps have never really understood what is true.*

*Lord, I understand how easy it is to be confused and distracted. The enemy is a clever enemy. But, Lord, I just pray that Your Spirit would lift the blinders, that they would understand what is true and receive Your gift of life. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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The story is told of William Randolph Hearst, the millionaire, multimillionaire news publisher, who was an avid art collector, who learned of a painting he just had to have. So he hired a number of people to search the world over to find this painting, only after months of searching to find out, he actually already owned the painting, and it was uncrated, sitting in one of his warehouses. I've often thought that story represents so many Christians, who are searching for something more. They're actually searching for what they already have, but they're searching for some sort of an experience, some sort of magic pill or formula, that's going to unlock their Christian life.

The truth is, John's reminding us we don't lack anything we need as a Christian. We just need to know and believe the truth. It would be my opinion, that in many ways, we have diminished the importance of truth in the Christian Church today. We're finding simple solutions to everyday problems, but often we fail to know the truth that sets us free. John is reminding us, **the only way you're going to find what you're searching for, is to know and understand and believe the truth.**