

CHRISTIANITY (*defined*)
A Study of 1 John
“Watch Out for Drop-Outs”
1 John 2:18-27

Pastor David O. Dykes, Green Acres Church, Tyler, Texas, February 28, 2021

INTRODUCTION: Have you ever heard about the Antichrist? Hundreds of books and tens of thousands of sermons and essays have been written about the Antichrist.

Throughout history, many individuals have been identified as the Antichrist - Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Roger Williams, who founded the first Baptist church in America, all identified the POPE in Rome as the Antichrist.

Beginning with FDR, almost every American President has at one time been called the antichrist (Gerald Ford was the only one who didn't make anyone's list as the Antichrist).

Other identifications of the Antichrist have been Nero, Napoleon, \ Hitler, Stalin, Mikhail Gorbachov (Some people said he had the mark of the beast on his head – doctor's call it a vascular birthmark), Idi Amin, Ayatollah Khomeini, Yasser Arafat, and even Papa Smurf, and Barney the Dinosaur. It can't be Barney because Revelation 12 speaks of a great red dragon and Barney is a Magenta dinosaur, so mark him off – actually, none of those were the Antichrist.

I believe, along with most evangelical scholars, that the final Antichrist won't show up to lead a One World Government until AFTER the church has been caught up to be with Jesus. Next Sunday, we'll be saying more about the second coming of Jesus.

So with all this interest in the Antichrist. Let's play a little BIBLE TRIVIA. HOW MANY TIMES DOES THE WORD ANTICHRIST APPEAR IN THE BIBLE? It must appear dozens of times. But it is only found a total of 5 times. And three times were in the passage we are going to read, again in 1 John 4, and once in 2 John.

So with that background let's read **John 2:18-27: Children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. By this we know that it is the last hour. They**

went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. However, they went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I have not written to you because you don't know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This one is the antichrist: the one who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; he who confesses the Son has the Father as well.

What you have heard from the beginning is to remain in you. If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that he himself made to us: eternal life.

I have written these things to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you don't need anyone to teach you. Instead, his anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie; just as it has taught you, remain in him.

The first sentence in our passage says, "Children, it is the last hour." The Apostle John, Paul and Simon Peter all wrote almost 2000 years ago that we are in the last hour. And if that was the last hour back then, we must be living in the last seconds of the last hour.

I remember the story of the old farmer who had a clock on the mantle that would strike one time for every hour. One night it malfunctioned. And instead of striking 12 times, it struck 14 times. The old farmer jumped up out of bed, got his family up and said, "Wake up! It's later than it's ever been before!"

I'm here to tell you, in terms of God's clock, it is later than it's ever been before. Now that word "hour" in verse 18 doesn't mean a 60-minute period. It means a period of time. We are indeed living in the last days. One of the signs Paul predicted for the last days was a general falling away from the faith. That's what this message is about. There were

spiritual drop-outs 2,000 years ago and they are still around. In this message we're going to talk about deserters and disciples.

1. YOU CAN RECOGNIZE DESERTERS BECAUSE THEY GO ASTRAY. These are those who at one time may have been in the church, but eventually they become spiritually AWOL's. Absent Without Love. They're the ones that John writes about in verse 19. **"They went out from us, but they did not belong to us..."**

No one likes a deserter. In 1775, during our War of Independence, there was a promising young officer who was promoted to the rank of colonel. But when he wasn't promoted fast enough, a few years later, this officer deserted the Colonial Army and defected to the Redcoats. He later led British troops in battle against the Colonists. His name was Benedict Arnold and every time you hear his name today, you associate it with betrayal.

According to John, there are a lot of people who are spiritual Benedict Arnolds. They are spiritual deserters. There are at least three ways you can recognize a spiritual deserter:

(1) They leave the church. I've been pastoring for 43 years, and I can look back and remember dozens of people who at one time were faithful attenders in church. They might have even served in the church. But after a period of time, they just drift away – and they seldom darken the door of a church again – except for a wedding or a funeral.

I recall specifically in a former church being close to a man who had a good job. He and his family didn't miss a Sunday. He taught a group of young married couples. If you had seen him you would have agreed with me that he was a model Christian. But he had some problems with his business, and before long, he stopped attending church. The last time I asked about him, I was told that he hasn't come back to church once in many decades. How can that happen?

John is writing about this very thing. There were some people who appeared to be faithful to the early churches. But they became drop-outs. John said, **"They went out from us because they weren't OF us."** You see, not everyone who attends church is a Christian.

Just look at our church roll. We have over 17,000 people who at one time affiliated with Green Acres. But a year ago, even before Covid, we

were seeing no more than about 5,000 people regularly involved in the church. That means that there are 12,000 people in East Texas who have become spiritual drop-outs. Sometimes people ask me, “Pastor, why don’t we just purge our rolls like some churches do? If they don’t attend in a year, we just drop their names.” But my response is that a church membership list is just a prayer list. At least these people are getting some kind of contact from us occasionally. And when they have a crisis in their life, they may reach out to Jesus and His church for help.

(2) They deny Christ. In the introduction, I mentioned the word “antichrist.” John is the only writer to use this title. The term “antichrist” has two meanings. First, the word “antichrist” has to do with false teachers and anyone who is standing against Jesus Christ. 2 John 1:7. says: **“Many deceivers have gone out into the world; they do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.”**

A false teacher who teaches that Jesus Christ really is not God's Son in the flesh is the antichrist. The second use of the terms refers to a particular individual who will be the leader of the final rebellion against God. This person is referred to by different names in the Bible. In Daniel’s prophecy, he is the little horn, and the prince who is to come. In 2 Thessalonians Paul calls him “the man of sin.” In Revelation 13, he’s called “the beast.” He will be a one-world ruler who will control a global monetary system. But as we will talk about next week, I don’t believe that the church will be here during the terrible reign of the Antichrist. Instead, right now, we have to guard against the many antichrists who are with us.

(3) They lead others astray. John warned against false prophets, and we still have them around today. The worst thing about a false prophet is not that they have forsaken the truth, but they lead others astray. John wrote: **I have written these things to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. (1 John 2:26)**

Every religious cult in America was started by someone who was at one time part of a New Testament Church. Rev. Jim Jones started out as a student pastor of a Methodist Church in Indianapolis. In 1957 he started

an evangelical, interracial church, and preached the Bible. He later moved the group to California because he predicted a nuclear Holocaust would hit the Eastern U.S. in 1967. By 1970, he rejected the Bible, and there are videos of him stomping on the Bible. In 1977, led his followers to move to Jonestown, Guyana. And one year later, 909 of them, including over 300 children, drank cyanide-laced Kool Aid. He was an antichrist, but not THE Antichrist.

David Koresh, whose real name was Vernon Howell, once claimed that he was born again and attended a Southern Baptist Church. He later attended the Seventh Day Adventist Church. He broke away from them and declared himself to be the final prophet of the Branch Davidians, and a modern incarnation of the Persian King Cyrus – that’s why he chose the name Koresh.

And many of us remember the sad, fiery ending of that saga that happened in Mount Carmel, Texas on April 19, 1993. The sad thing about antichrists is that they lead so many unsuspecting people away – and sometimes the results are fatal. So how do you recognize a REAL DISCIPLE?

2. YOU CAN RECOGNIZE DISCIPLES BECAUSE THEY STAY.

During Covid, there has been a lot of new phrases – one of them is “coronavirus long-haulers.” Sadly it describes some patients who suffer from Covid symptoms for weeks and months. I was thinking about that, and I decided that’s a good word for a disciple. A real disciple is a Jesus long-hauler. They don’t leave, they remain. And John wrote: “**...For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us.**” (1 John 2:19) There are three ways to recognize a Jesus long-hauler:

(1) True disciples love God’s church. And I’m not talking about the building – I’m talking about the body of Christ, which is made up of brothers and sisters – the church is people. I’ve met people through the years who have driven by our facilities, and they say, “I really love your church. It’s beautiful!” I never put them down, of course, but I usually say, “Thank you, God has blessed us with nice facilities, but the church that gathers there truly is beautiful.

Others watch our broadcast and tell me they love our church. They may love the broadcast of our church, the songs of our church, the preaching of our church, but you can't love the church from a distance.

You can't say you love Jesus if you never gather with the church. That's like saying you love to swim, but you never get in the water.

I was visiting a couple years ago inviting them to attend our church.

They told me that they were Christians and read the Bible and prayed together, but didn't see the need to be a part of a church. They were a nice couple, but didn't see the need to gather with other believers. We had a nice conversation, and I was walking toward the door to leave. I noticed several softball trophies on the mantle.

I asked him, "Do you like to play softball?" He said, "I do. I love it."

And he explained all the trophies. Then he asked me, "Do you play softball?" I said, "I love to play softball, too." He asked, "What team do you play for?" I said, "Well, I don't think you need a team. I just go out to the softball park by myself and toss the ball up and catch it and hit pop flies to the outfield." He looked at me like I was crazy. Then he smiled and said, "I know what you're trying to say." I said, "That's right. God only has one team – and it is the church. Now what position would you like to play?" He laughed – and I'm glad to report before long, he and his wife were coming on a regular basis – and he played on our church softball team. Do you love the church? You'll show up.

Now I want to be careful how I say this – but there are many of you who haven't felt safe coming to church since we started regathering. We have been careful, and thank God, so far, we haven't had any kind of super-spreader event. But we're moving toward the time when it will be safe for everyone to regather. I read an article from *Preaching Magazine* this week that predicted that thousands of people who were once faithful to attend church will not return. It's because they have gotten out of the habit. And it's a lot easier just to get up and turn on the television, or sit in bed with the laptop. I pray to the Lord that you don't become one of those drop-outs. God never called us to be spectator Christians. He called us to be a part of a body that gathers and goes. That means real disciples ATTEND church and EXTEND the church into the community like our members were doing yesterday at Feed our Friends. To those

who have been watching on television: Come back when masks are no longer required, and we're not blocking off every other pew. We miss you. And you need the benefits of gathering with other disciples.

(2) True disciples learn from God's Word. A true disciple is a learner. And there is great value in personal study of the Word, but the best model is to study God's Word alone, and then be a part of a church and a connect group, where gifted and passionate teachers can help you learn more about the Bible.

George Barna did a study a few years ago and found that there was an alarming level of Biblical ignorance among Christians who attend church regularly. For instance, his surveys found that many Christians couldn't tell you who came first Moses or Abraham. Less than half could name all four Gospel Writers; And on average, they could only name three of the twelve disciples.

It reminds me of the funny story of the teenage boy who came to pick up the preacher's daughter for a first date. While they were getting ready, the nervous young man was sitting there with the pastor, and wanted to make conversation. The kid saw a Bible and picked it up. He looked at the cover and said, "I see you read one of my favorite writers, Holly Beeble. I've read all her books." That's the best I've got today.

The key is to never STOP learning. I've been studying this book almost every day for 51 years, yet I don't consider myself a Bible Scholar. I consider myself a Bible student.

(3) True disciples listen to God's Spirit. Many times before I teach or preach, I ask God to allow the Holy Spirit to teach us. I'm referring to the **anointing** that John writes about here. The word "anointing" is the Greek word *chrisma*, we get our words charisma and charismatic from it. It goes back to the idea of the High Priest having Olive Oil poured on him – to represent the Holy Spirit. Later, Kings would be anointed with oil when they assumed the throne. Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, "behold the Spirit of the Lord is upon me and He has anointed me to preach."

Then in James 5 we are told to lay hands on the sick and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. I've done that many times throughout

my ministry. But John is writing here about an inner anointing that is very important.

In 1 John 2:27 we read: **“As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in (*not ON you – IN you*) you, and you don’t need anyone to teach you. Instead, his anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie; just as it has taught you, remain in him.**

Let me illustrate this anointing so you can understand it. Imagine you’re watching television. Your television is hooked up by a cable or a satellite dish to a source of programming somewhere else. When that receiver is working, you are able to see images and hear audio from another realm. And those images and sounds are presented right there in your room. That’s like the anointing.

Every believer has an inner receiver – the Holy Spirit. When that receiver is turned on, you are able to pick up that which is coming from another realm – heaven- to you. What you get is God’s perspective and God’s truth, so you can act on it. You need this so you won’t be tricked by the devil and his band of deceivers.

This anointing is so powerful that John says you don’t need anyone to teach you. That doesn’t mean we don’t need preachers and teachers – they are mentioned everywhere in the New Testament. It literally means that when you have this anointing, you don’t need JUST ANYONE to teach you. Remember, the context is false teachers and deserters. Let me explain how this anointing works. When it is turned on and someone teaches you false doctrine – this receiver sets off an alarm that says, “Liar, liar, not true.” So you DON’T need just anyone to teach you. On the other hand when the receiver is turned on and you hear truth being taught, you hear the message, “right on, brother, amen and amen!”

This anointing is IN you because you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. Now our job is to just remain – keep that receiver on and tuned in to the right station. Turn it on when you are in church. Turn it on when you watch the secular news – because there really is a LOT of fake news out there, and you need God’s perspective, not the perspective of some talking head in New York City.

CONCLUSION: And there is one simple key to live in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We just remain in Christ. John used the word “remain” six times in these few verses. The Christian life can be summarized in three simple statements Jesus made. He said “Come unto me.” That’s salvation. He said, “Follow me.” That’s discipleship. And He said, “Abide (Remain) in me.” That’s the anointing – the life of fruitfulness. It’s the word REMAIN. In John 15 Jesus taught us that key to bearing fruit is to remain connected to Him. Are you resting and remaining in Christ?

Let me illustrate it by using a cup of hot tea. A few times when Cindy and I have traveled to Europe we enjoyed afternoon tea at the hotel. I take the tea bag and dip it in and out to try to speed up the process of changing the water to tea. Then I’ll fish the tea bag out with my spoon and press the tea bag to get the last bit of tea out of it. Meanwhile, Cindy knows how to enjoy tea. She just places the tea bag in the hot water and puts the saucer over the top of the cup for the tea to steep. And as the tea bag remains in the water, it changes it to tea. I’ll admit her way is better. And there’s a lesson for us. You don’t have to work your fingers to the bone to experience the fullness of Christ – you just have to do what it says in verse 17: **“Just as He has taught you, REMAIN in Him.”** So watch out for drop-outs. Make sure you are a disciple instead of a spiritual deserter.