

CHALLENGING THE COUNTERFEIT AND CONFIRMING THE GENUINE

1 John 2:18-23

INTRODUCTION

Beloved, we know, as God's children, that we have a rich inheritance that will last forever.

→ READ 1 John 2:18-23

Proposition: 3 Benefits of your Birthright:

- I. The **Hour of Deception**
- II. The **Spirit of Illumination**
- III. The **Mark of Separation**

So That: In God's sovereignty, even things that are disheartening in some ways, we know that He causes those things to work together for His good.

1st Benefit of your Birthright, ...

I. The Hour of Deception 1 John 2:18-19

Point – He is reminding us that we are in the End Times; in the midst of the danger of these times and we have assurance.

Proof – **“¹⁸Children, it is the last hour; 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.**

¹⁹They 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.”

“**Children**” – from the original Greek word παιδίον which means more literally of age – infant, babe

- root word of “pediatrics” and “paedobaptist”

- vis-à-vis the original Greek word τεκνίον (2:12) which is more a term of affection

“it is the last hour” – continues the theme in **v. 17** - “the world is passing away”

Some of you might remember 30-40 years ago that there was a general fervor in the land that the End Times were near. Many of those people referred to the establishment of Israel in 1948.

But when the end times or the last times or the last hour are referred to in the Bible, these are not references to newspaper events.

John is writing some 2000 years ago and he writes that it is the last hour.

- Since the resurrection of Christ and the ascension of Christ, it is the last hour.
- No prophetic events that need to happen before Christ returns.
- Jesus could come at any time.
- This is the doctrine of Imminence.

A few Scripture references to elaborate on this:

Acts 2:16–17 – “this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind.’”

Heb 1:2 – “[God] in these last days has spoken to us in *His* Son”

Heb 9:26 – “now ... at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

1 Pet 1:20 – “He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you”

“and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen;”

The word ‘antichrist’ only appears from the Apostle John - in 2:18 (twice), 22; **4:3; 2 John 7**

Where did they hear?

Where did these believers in Asia Minor previously hear this?
→ Among others, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, and now John

Dan 7:7, 8, 20-21, 24-26; 9:27;

In **Dan 11: 21–35**, the most cruel king of the North was the Syrian persecutor of Israel **Antiochus Epiphanes** (8:9–14,23–25). He attacked Jerusalem’s temple, profaned the sacrificial system, massacred 80,000 men, took 40,000 prisoners, and sold 40,000 as slaves. (**11:31**) His soldiers halted worship, attacked the city on the Sabbath slaughtering men, women, and children. He banned circumcision and sacrifices and sacrificed a pig on the altar.

He put an idol statue of the Olympian god Zeus into the temple. Jews called it “the Abomination of Desolation.”

That would be the first introduction to those reading the Bible of this person referred to as the antichrist.

He was the short term fulfillment of what would take place in the nation of Israel only a few hundred years after Daniel wrote this.

Both **Daniel** and **Jesus** (after Antiochus Epiphanes) said this was only a preview of what would happen under the final antichrist.

Matt 24:15-21 – “Then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.” – 7 year period beginning when the Antichrist signs the peace treaty with Israel (Dan 9:27)

Jesus – “the Abomination of Desolation” (**Matt 24:15**)

- Midpoint of the Tribulation period when the antichrist sets himself up in the temple in Jerusalem and demands worship as god.

Paul: 2 Thess 2:1-4, 8-9

Zeph 1:15 – “A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness,”

These passages of Scripture give a picture of how devastating this time will be and how John’s readers may have heard of the antichrist prior to his writing.

What John is saying here is that there is a future Antichrist; a singular person who will fulfill these prophecies. And at the same time, there are many antichrists (false teachers) who have already come.

There is kind of an escalation:

- the one person - literally “the Antichrist” - singular
- many - false teachers - plural
- all - unbelievers

“**anti**” can mean ‘against’ or ‘in place of’ - here it means both in John’s text

Rev 6-19 gives great detail → judgment is poured out upon the world and Israel is brought through tremendous suffering to receive Christ as Messiah

John – An attitude toward Christ that personifies itself finally in one person, but in the meantime, in many persons. Any person who is against Christ, any person who attacks the deity of Jesus Christ, any person who is hostile to the true nature of Christ, His deity and His humanity, possesses the spirit of antichrist.

So, where is the blessing of the birthright?

“from this we know that it is the last hour”

→ Confirmation! Assurance! Comfort!

When we see the heresy, the silliness and the folly on television or around the world, it is reminder that we are in the end times.

→ This is a soothing ointment for us as children of God for the wound of doubt or the cut of disappointment.

“^{19a}**They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us;**”

→ epic, seminal text!

Point – There will be people who share our earthly company, but do not share our heavenly birth.

“they ... us” – 5 times in this verse

John is not writing this to instill an ‘us-them’ mentality. He is writing not to elevate or exalt you or me, but to remind us of the birthright we have in Jesus.

He answers the error of thinking that a Christian can lose his salvation. This is a wrong answer to a right question, about “easy believism.”

We have all heard the stories and all of us will at some point ask the question, “What about [such and such person who served, seemed to follow and fell away]?”

<u>Answer</u> → “they” were never Christians in the first place
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Prov 26:11 – “Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.”

Application – By the way, the less Truth that is lived and preached, the longer and easier it is for the unsaved to remain comfortable, deceive others, and deceive themselves in the confines of the company of God’s people.

How do we know that they were not of us?

“^{19b}**for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us;**”

Point – **Eternal security** and the perseverance of the saints cast against the backdrop of ...**eternal insecurity** and the falling away of the sinners

Phil 1:6 – “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Unbreakable chain of salvation:

Rom 8:29-30; Eph 1:3-14; 2 Thess 2:13-14; 1 Pet 1:1-5

Mark 13:13 – “the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.”

Heb 3:14 – “we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;”

Application – Live in the light of the lateness of the hour
→ “**overcomers**” – 1 John 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4f

Washer – “*Christianity is NOT doing all the righteous things you hate and avoiding all the wicked things you love in order to go to heaven. That is a lost man with religion. A Christian is a person whose heart has been changed; they have new affections.*”

“^{19c}**but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.**”

ina – this is a purpose statement → the **Blessing of Apostasy**

John's point of telling "us" this is NOT to unsettle our confidence and remove our assurance. His point, rather, is to strengthen our confidence and confirm our assurance.

Application – John 9:4 – “We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work.”

Even when we see those who have professed faith in Christ reject Him, turn their back on Him, and leave the fellowship of His people.

2nd Benefit of your Birthright, ...

II. The Spirit of Illumination 1 John 2:20-21

Point – Resources of True Believers → the **Blessing of Legacy**

Proof – “²⁰**But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.** 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.**”

“^{20a}**But you have an anointing from the Holy One**” – from the Greek word χρίσμα – same root as “Christ” which means the Anointed One

Literally the word means - what has been spread on *ointment*

- used in the Old Testament to symbolize appointment to and empowerment for a task
- used in the New Testament as the empowering of the Holy Spirit for a task *endowment*

“^{20b}**and you all know.** ^{21a}**I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it,**”

Point – Elsewhere in his letter, John tells us why he is writing (joy, holiness, assurance).

Here he tells us why he is not writing.

“^{21b}**and because no lie is of the truth.**”

Point – John writes to challenge the counterfeit and confirm the genuine

Alistair Begg – “*That’s why John wrote this jolly letter.*”

The threat of false teaching. The greatest threat then, now, and always ... is not **unbelief**; it is **wrong belief**.
The great threat is not the **doubter**; it is the **deceiver**.
It’s not **irreligion**; it’s **heresy**.

→ **4:1-6** - expands on this even more

The false teachers claim a special anointing and a secret knowledge of God that only they’ve been initiated into.
NO! → You have been initiated into the true knowledge of God by virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Every believer is anointed by God with His Holy Spirit.

Receiving the Spirit and the anointing of God is not something that happens after salvation.

Not some second step into a secret knowledge.

It is what God uses to bring us into the knowledge of Christ.

Illustration – John MacArthur – “*true Christians have a built in lie detector*”

Application – This is confirmation, not innovation

It has been well said:

A church that is all Spirit, but no Word → will blow up

A church that is all Word, no Spirit → will dry up

A church that is both Word and Spirit → will grow up

3rd Benefit of your **Birthright**, ...

III. The Mark of Separation 1 John 2:22-23

Point – The marks of true and false believers in the context of heresy

Point – Beloved, all heresies, all cults, begin with assault and error regarding the nature of Christ. Jesus Christ is the most loved person who ever walked on this earth, and Jesus Christ is the most hated person who ever walked on this earth.

→ John is bringing out the truth you know and the error you face

Proof –

“²²Who 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. ²³Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.”

“^{22a}Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?”

→ Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. All true and false religion begins and ends with Him!

Calvin – *“We now see that Christ is denied whenever the things that belong to him are taken from him. And as Christ is the end of the Law and the Gospel and has within himself all the treasures of wisdom and understanding, so also is he the mark at which all heretics aim and direct their arrows. Therefore, the apostle has good reason to make those who fight against Christ the leading liars, since the full truth is exhibited to us in him.”*

“^{22b}This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.”

Paraphrase of **John**

→ “Wherever you hear a denial or a distortion of the Bible’s teaching about Jesus, I give you the antichrist.”

The Apostle of Love is very soft and seeker-friendly in his approach here. No! John does not back down on his language at all.

If someone comes with a different Jesus

→ he is “**the liar**” and “**the antichrist**”

Martin Luther – “*Always preach in such a way that if the people listening do not come to hate their sin, they will instead hate you.*”

“^{23a}**Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father;**”

→ If you don’t get Jesus right, everything else goes wrong.

→ Your sin divides you like a wall from God’s presence. It can only be removed by Jesus Christ.

The blessing:

“^{23b}**the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.**”

A Jesus who is not the incarnate Son of God is incapable of bearing your sins and bringing you into fellowship with the Father.

19th century Scottish theologian **John Duncan** – “*The dust of the earth sits on the throne of heaven.*” What he means by that is that in the incarnation, Jesus Christ was born as a man. Now glorified, He is sitting at the right hand of the Father. That is the Jesus proclaimed in the Bible.

Martin Luther – “*I must listen to the gospel. It tells me not what I must do, but what Jesus Christ the Son of God has done for me.*”

CONCLUSION