

1 John 2:18-23

“A Package Deal”

“It doesn’t matter *what* you believe as long as you’re sincere *in* your belief.” How many of us have heard that particular perspective before? It’s a statement that expresses the personal philosophy of no small amount of people today. “As long as they’re *sincere*, God will understand that and accept that.” Yet I question whether or not most of those people who take that position have really taken the time to *sincerely* think it through. They’ve assumed a position that advocates “sincerity” as the *magic ingredient* that somehow makes something true, and therefore acceptable. If it is, then you ought to be able to apply it to every arena of life and not only to “spiritual” matters or matters of “religion.”

Suppose for a moment that a nurse at St John’s, or at Freeman hospital gave some medicine to a patient and the patient became violently ill and nearly died? She was sincere about her endeavors, her actions and her beliefs yet that in no way changes the fact that the medicine was wrong and the patient nearly died. Did her *sincerity* justify her belief, or her actions based upon her belief? For you it might depend on whether or not you were the patient

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A man hears a noise in the middle of the night and comes to the conclusion that there’s a thief pilfering through his house. He grabs his gun and shoots the “thief” who turns out to be his daughter getting up to get something to eat because she couldn’t sleep. In so doing she ends up the victim of her father’s *sincerity*.

Here’s my point; it takes more than sincerity to make something true or to justify my actions based upon what I believe, and faith (or believing) in something that *isn’t* true will always result in serious consequences. You might say that when it comes to life, what we believe and the way that we behave; it’s truth or consequences! What a man believes will make a huge difference in the way he leads his life presently and his ultimate destiny eternally. If you want to go to L.A. there isn’t any amount of sincerity that will get you there if you take the highway headed for Chicago.

John has been seeking to arm us, or equip us with tools to aid us in our discernment and detection of light Vs dark, love Vs hate, godliness Vs worldliness and the way that these conflict with one another and cannot co-exist with one another. They’re mutually exclusive in their nature.

As we approach this particular portion of scripture he places another conflicting set of standards before us; the *truth* Vs the *lie*, *accuracy* Vs *error* concerning what we believe and the critical nature as to why we believe it. Believe me when I tell you that we live in a day and at a time when there's no end to "religious options" out there for you to place your faith in. Or to understand that another way; the spirit of antichrist *abounds* in this world... That's why it's absolutely critical that you know and believe the *truth* and be able to detect or discern the *lies* when they come your way, and this is the point to which John draws our attention beginning in Vs 18.

Vs18-19

There are a # of things that as we consider even these 1st couple of Vs that we do well to consider. There's more than one thing that sort surfaces here that make for interesting topics of conversation and consideration.

Perhaps the 1st thing we should note is this proclamation, this declaration that John makes right there in Vs 18, "Little children, *it is the last hour*;" Because with that it becomes evident that John lived his life with the constant *expectation* and with the unrelenting *anticipation* that Christ could return at any moment. Paul the apostle had the same notion. He said, "*The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*" Romans 13:12 The apostle Peter felt the same way. He said, "*But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.*" 1 Peter 4:7 James said this, "*Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!*" James 5:9 From the time that Jesus ascended into heaven there has been an eager anticipation and a certain expectation in each successive generation that their generation will be the one to see the return of Christ. Why? Personally; I believe it's because that's exactly the way God wants it to be. "What do you mean?" There isn't a motive more powerful that will act as a cleansing agent in your life and in my life than to really believe that Jesus could return at any moment.

When Jesus was upon the earth He asserted over and over again that we were to watch and to be ready for His return. Yet as for the day and the hour He left that ambiguous, why? Because He knows us; He knows the nature of humanity. That we will slack, we'll slide in our responsibilities, our sense of accountability if we believe in our heart, "My master delays His coming." That's why He said, "*Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.*" Matt 24:42 There's intentional ambiguity there, so that we might stay sharp and on point, being busy about our Master's business so that He might find us so doing faithfully when He returns. That constant state of expectancy concerning Christ's return has a purifying effect upon the church.

Now; when one reads this initially from the perspective perhaps of an unbeliever he might be tempted to scoff at us Christians and say, “Last hour!? John thought that then, they thought that 400 yrs ago, you think that today, what is it? It seems to me that you guys have simply spun a bearing.” But to that I would respond with a couple of things to consider.

#1 Understand that the bible qualifies the time from Christ’s 1st coming until His 2nd coming as the “Last days” or “Last times.” There’s a whole lot of human history prior to the coming of Christ, yet the moment Jesus was made manifest in the flesh we entered into a “last call” kind of context concerning the time line of this planet and the people on it. Peter tells us concerning Christ, “*He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*” 1 Peter 1:20 Of course we read in the book of Hebrews, “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,*” Heb 1:1-2 So from the time of Christ forward we’ve been living in the last times, the “final hour” that’s one reason out of many why there’s such an urgency placed upon the call to salvation. Things are winding down, they’re wrapping up, today is the day, *now* is the acceptable time. Why? Because we might not have tomorrow that’s just the fact.

Of course when we consider this kind of topic it opens up the whole arena of bible prophecy, things that God has told mankind in advance, sometimes hundreds or even thousands of years in advance. Declaring the end (in essence) from the beginning. (Which is my 2nd point)

Now the bible declared literally 100’s of prophecies concerning the 1st coming of Christ. That He would be born in Bethlehem, that He would be called a Nazarene, that He would come out of Egypt.

Things that would seem to be in-cohesive, how can you be born in Bethlehem, be called a Nazarene and yet be called out of Egypt? But they were all perfectly fulfilled in Jesus, the scriptures declared His healing ministry, His teaching ministry, the fact that He would die a very specific death even declaring that His hands and His feet would be pierced. That they would make His grave with the wicked, but with the rich at His death. Now listen, every single prophecy concerning the 1st coming of Christ, from His birth, to His life, to His death, and the way He would die, even His resurrection was perfectly fulfilled in Jesus. Now if the bible declared with pinpoint accuracy the nature and character of Jesus’ 1st coming, shouldn’t we anticipate the same staggering precision concerning its declaration of His 2nd coming?

The bible declares what things will be like just prior to Christ's return, not the day or the hour, but the times and the seasons. How things will look politically, how things will be economically and socially, the global tension that will surround the middle east, Israel specifically. Just this week the announcement was made, (Thurs Feb 11 2010) "President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed Thursday that Iran has produced its first batch of uranium enriched to a higher level, saying his country will not be bullied by the West into curtailing its nuclear program a day after the U.S. imposed new sanctions." Now he's made those claims before, but the point remains, tensions are high in the Middle East, it's no secret that they want to erase Israel from the map. Ezekiel 38-39 giving a very graphic description of a massive (perhaps on a nuclear scale) kind of war that breaks out in the Middle East prior to the 2nd coming of Christ. Now whether or not the church is raptured by that time people debate, yet my point remains, all signs point to a "go" concerning the return of Jesus for His bride. John may've been in the last hour, but we've got to be in the last minutes, I don't know if that means 10 yrs or 100 yrs, but we've never been in a more biblically perfect position for the return of Christ than we are right now. Paul said, "*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*" 2 Tim 3:1-4 He went on to say that many would have a *form* of godliness but they'd deny it's power, there'd be no substance or credibility to it, empty religion. You guys if that's not where we live I don't know what is...believe me when I tell you that the prophetic pump has been primed for the fulfillment of the 2nd coming of Christ.

Now with in the context of the coming again of Christ this other character surfaces in advance, John speaks of him here, "Antichrist." He says, "The Antichrist is coming." This infamous, insidious character that comes on to the scene the final few years of planet earth to deceive the world; I think most people have heard of the Antichrist but not a lot of people have a truly biblical understanding of who he is. They think that he sits around in a pentagram with candles lit on each point, that evil drips from him in obvious fashion, that everywhere he goes someone dies and that if you were to shave his head you'd find the #'s 666 underneath his hair. We have Hollywood to thank for those images not the bible.

Who then *is* this *Antichrist*? The name "Antichrist" is itself important to understand. Because the prefix *anti* can mean "opposite of" but it can also mean "instead of," most people view the Antichrist as the "opposite of" Christ.

Meaning that even as Jesus went around doing good, he'll do evil, as much as Jesus was attractive in His personality and beautiful in His character the Antichrist will be repulsive and sinister in his personality, he'll appear as a *supremely evil* person to be feared by all. Jesus spoke the truth, he'll speak only lies; and though certainly there's an element of truth to those things *ultimately*, in reality more than "the opposite" Jesus, the bible portrays him as someone who will be an "instead of" Jesus. This man will look wonderful, be heralded as a hero, he'll be charming and successful, everyone will love him, he'll appear as an angel of light...

Essentially he will be a world dictator who will lead humanity into a seemingly golden age of peace and prosperity, but only a few short years into it and he'll show his true colors and of course the judgment of God will be poured out upon him and upon the earth in unparalleled fashion just prior to the return of Jesus to establish *His* rule and reign over the earth. You see he's a counterfeit Christ, and anytime there's a counterfeit it bears witness to the fact of the genuine article. We've spoken of this before, the reason you can buy counterfeit gold, or counterfeit diamonds is because there is a genuine article. The fact that there are false gospels, false christs, and other invitations to salvation bears witness to the fact that there is a legitimate gospel, a true Christ and an specific invitation unto salvation that man needs to hearken unto...

But now is not the time to be "lulled to sleep" spiritually, the global stage is set for a political, economical "superman" to arise, a single world leader to organize a confederation of nations. We hear talk of a new world order, but no one has really been able to define it, much less lead it. But one is coming who will; and the people on this planet have been conditioned through the cult of personality to accept such a man. Why is it that because someone can convince me of lies in front of a camera (also known as acting) I should be concerned for his/her daily routine, what they eat, who they date, what their political views are? Yet we have this tendency to worship celebrities in this country, people in other countries (by the hundreds of millions) have been induced to worship the likes of Lenin, Stalin, or Mao. A personality cult can be powerful when a government gets behind it wholeheartedly. These kind of things should be sending signals to us that when the moment is right Antichrist is ready to be revealed.

"Wait a minute Jeff, are you saying that you believe the Antichrist in on the earth today?" I believe it's very, very possible that he is. As for trying to point him out, it's pointless, "Wait a minute, aren't we an Obama-nation?" ☺ Rest at ease, it's not Obama, it's probable that the Antichrist doesn't even know that he *is* the Antichrist at this point.

There's really only one man in the bible (outside of the Antichrist) who has the # 666 in anyway identified with him and that was King Solomon. We read, "*The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold,*" 1 Kings 10:14 What could Solomon have to offer us concerning potential insight into this man known as the Antichrist? When you get to know Solomon's story you discover that everyone seemed to love him, people paid him homage, he led the kingdom into unparalleled prosperity and peace and ruled a "golden age" of Israel's history, he was incredibly successful but in the end Solomon was a good man gone bad.

Perhaps in like manner the Antichrist will be "good guy" gone bad. Things will begin well, everyone will love him; peace, prosperity, he'll usher in a golden age in human history.

But ultimately he will come *against* God, and will be judged in devastating fashion *by* God. But listen, let's not spend our time looking for the *Antichrist*, we're to keep our eyes *on*, be watching and waiting *for* Jesus Christ I don't know about you, but I don't plan on being around when the Antichrist is revealed, I plan on being caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall I ever be with the Lord! Look with me quickly at 2nd Thess 2 (Vs 1-8)

So Antichrist *is* coming, but not before Jesus Christ comes to receive His bride, make plans to be in *that* #!

John says, "Even now many antichrists have come by which we know that it is the last hour." So we're picking up on the fact that the word "antichrist" can have various connotations. Obviously "Antichrist" is a literal person; we've spent considerable time discussing that.

There is also what John will call the "spirit" of Antichrist, we think of Judas, or Caesar Nero, more recently we think of a guy like Hitler, and his murderous tirade in the spirit of Antichrist in trying to destroy God's people.

Then beyond that we'll find right here that John identifies anyone who denies Christ His rightful place as the Son of God, (His deity) or denies the Father and the Son in any way as to their relationship to one another is *antichrist* (small "a"). He (John) says that there are *all kinds* of those guys around. In Matt 24 Jesus said that there would be *many* of them, all around us, seeking to deceive us. In that regard the "spirit of antichrist" is behind *every false doctrine* and/or every "religious" substitute for the realities that Christians have in Christ. Anything that offers an "instead of Jesus" approach to God (meaning the Jesus of the bible, not the Mormon Jesus, or the JW Jesus) is antichrist.

John is saying that these guys on the scene with their alternative approaches to God is only evidence of the lateness in the hour prior to the coming again of Jesus.

Vs19

The fact that even though they once were perhaps *apart* the body of Christ *numerically*, (they came to church) they left the body of Christ and that demonstrates that they were never really *in* the body of Christ *spiritually*. They didn't *abide* in Christ. Jesus spoke of wheat, and tares, they grow together, but they're not the same. Now that doesn't mean that everyone that leaves a church, and finds another solid fellowship demonstrates they weren't of us. Sometimes people move on, it's necessarily an indication that they're spiritually corrupt. John is talking about someone who checks out of the body, period.

Why would they go out from us? 2 Reasons, #1 The Lord Will Prune, that is He cuts off and casts out the unfruitful, unproductive branch, that is the one who does not *abide* in Him (Jhn 15). #2 A Healthy Body Will Purge, that is it will fight off and flush out toxins and impurities, those things that pose a threat to its ongoing effective nature. When a body ceases to flush out or fight off toxins it begins to die. Sometimes the purging takes place in the form of church discipline, other times it occurs naturally when a person is confronted by the Spirit and has to make a decision. I've discovered that when a church believes wholeheartedly *in* and stands wholeheartedly *upon* the word of God, people who aren't serious *about* the word of God don't stick around. It may take a few months, maybe even a few years but the day will come when that person will come to a point where they have to decide, get serious about Christ or get out.

Not because they're told that, but because they're convicted inwardly concerning that. They can't play games anymore, and they either commit their lives to Christ, or they leave the church. The Lord will prune, the body will purge. So when a person goes out *from* us in that fashion, it's only to expose the fact that they were never really *of* us, or else they would've remained *with us*. Sometimes it's someone who's so "spiritual" so "gifted" that they can't get along with anyone else because no one is as enlightened as they are, so they get in a huff and leave... Paul the apostle said it like this, "*For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.*" 1 Cor 11:19

Vs 20

More literally it says, "and you all know" not that you know everything, but that you know the truth of what he's saying here. It bears witness in your heart because you have an anointing from the Holy One. That is Jesus has given you His Holy Spirit therefore there are things that you're simply going to know, or recognize that not everyone else does. The word "know" here is not the word that means to know "by experience" because you and I certainly haven't experienced everything. The word here is to know "by intuition", you know the truth intuitively, you recognize it because of the Holy Spirit who is in you. Jesus said it like this, "*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*" John 10:27

You should also notice that the “anointing” is the common property of all Christians. Now we may not all walk in submission to the anointing God has given us, but the NT doesn’t anywhere speak of a special “anointing” given to a select few to wave around and throw out. It doesn’t support that people under “the anointing” start acting all weird, or out of control, you don’t “catch” the anointing like a common cold or a virus, that’s not the biblical concept of *anointing*. But as you *submit* yourself, and yield yourself *to* the Spirit, you will reap the benefits of the Spirit, one of which is an enlightening to the truth of God’s word as opposed to error.

Now John isn’t saying that we don’t need biblical instruction from gifted teachers of God’s word. Eph 4 makes it clear that one of the ways the Spirit enlightens us is through gifted teachers of the word. But nonetheless anytime your understanding is opened and the word is illuminated to you it’s because the Holy Spirit is teaching you truth, consequently you will be able to detect error.

Vs21-23

Is what we believe, the things that we assert as true absolutely essential? Absolutely, what you believe matters, sincerity is not a magic ingredient. What does it mean to say that “Jesus is the Christ”? It goes beyond a simple acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah. The text here makes it clear that it connects directly with understanding Jesus’ relationship to God the Father. John says that the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar, then he *immediately* connects antichrist with one who denies the Father and the Son, the deity of Christ and His relationship to the Father.

Some people believe in Christ, but they believe in Him as *they define* Him, but the bible rejects that. We can’t define who Christ is for us, we have to submit to what the *bible* says about who Christ is for us; fully God, fully man, perfectly revealing the Father *to* us. How many time people will say, “Well, we all worship the same God, we just call Him by different names.

Get to Him by different roads.” That puzzle can be solved real quick. Answer me this; Was you God perfectly revealed to you in Jesus Christ? If so we serve the same God, if not we don’t serve the same God, you don’t serve the God as revealed in scripture, because the bible is clear that there is an inseparable relationship between God the Father and God the Son. And God the Son perfectly revealed to us God the Father.

There are lots of religious people who reject Jesus, their religion might help them in some moral way here, but it does nothing for them before God. Because in rejecting Jesus, they reject God. They’re inseparable, you can’t divide them, because both are one God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one. Jesus said, “*I and My Father are One.*” Jhn 10:30

So whoever denies the Son does not have the Father, and he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Again Jesus said, "*He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.*" John 12:44-45 One more John 13:20, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.*"

They're a package deal, if you will hear His voice and respond to His call, now is the acceptable time, today is the day of salvation, of sanctification, take heed to *His* voice in *your* life today.

Prayer Points:

Father how can we read your Word and not be struck with a sense of urgency, with the need for personal purity in our lives. Lord may we watch and be ready and be found faithful at Your return, surely the time is short. You've said that when we see these things *begin* to happen, look up, and lift up our heads for our redemption draws near. Even so come Lord Jesus.

If you're not ready for the Lord's return, you aren't prepared to meet Him in the air, you've not surrendered to Him, you've not come to the cross and given your life to Jesus who has poured out His blood for you, suffered and died for you, and who has risen from the dead that He might save you and keep you in His heart, in His presence eternally...than why not respond to Him today, right here, right now, now is the acceptable time, I can't promise you tomorrow...