

10. The Epistle of 1 John—2:17-18

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All the way through John's first Epistle he is contrasting two kingdoms—the Kingdom of Light and the kingdom of darkness.

These kingdoms are ruled by two very different kings—the Kingdom of Light is ruled by the God of Light Who has no darkness (moral evil) in Him at all (1:5)!

The kingdom of darkness is ruled by the god of this world, the devil, who is the very personification of darkness and evil—a being who has no light in him at all!

One kingdom is going to end (in fact it is already passing away)—while the other is an eternal Kingdom that will never end, and in fact, is already getting brighter the more people receive Jesus and enter into it—

1 John 2:8 (NKJV)

Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

Now, that statement becomes the theme for what follows, as John contrasts the transitory nature of Satan's kingdom with the eternal nature of God's Kingdom. As John is contrasting these two kingdoms, he is challenging his readers to understand the choice that was before many of them who were 'playing games' with their eternity.

Those that John had in mind were no doubt 'church-goers' since it is doubtful that he was targeting non-church going unbelievers with his epistle (even though no doubt some unbelievers did read his epistle). Don't get me wrong, John did have *unbelievers* in mind when he wrote much of chapters 2 and 3—but they were unbelievers who apparently *thought* they were saved.

As we have been studying, John points out the inconsistencies of those who claim to be Christians, go to church and maintain a religious façade—and yet don't live lives that are consistent with those who are truly born-again and have the Holy Spirit within them.

First of all, true Christians want to keep God's commandments—a true test of legitimacy:

1 John 2:3-4 (NKJV)

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Secondly, true Christians love other Christians—another mark of genuineness:

1 John 2:9 (NKJV)

⁹ He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

And thirdly, true Christians no longer love the world—and so:

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV)

¹⁵ ...If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

As we just said, John sees the world as divided into two kingdoms—the Kingdom of Light ruled by God Almighty and the kingdom of darkness ruled by the devil. Furthermore, John tells us that all mankind falls into one of two categories with regard to these two kings and their kingdoms—either they are children of God or children of the devil.

So, as John is revealing the warning signs of false Christians—he is challenging them to rethink what they love and are loyal to. If they love and are more loyal to the world rather than God—not only are they probably NOT saved, but they have made a terrible investment—they are investing their whole life in something that is “*passing away*” (verse 17).

Jesus Himself warned His followers about the same thing when He said—

Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Again, when John talks about the world “**passing away**” (the Greek is “*in the process of disappearing*”), he isn’t talking about the planet earth—although, as we just finished studying in 2Peter 3—the earth will pass away at one point:

2 Peter 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

But that’s not what John has in mind in chapter 2 verse 17 when he says—“**the world is passing away**”—he means the fallen, corrupt, demonic world system which Satan controls!

Warren Wiersbe—

That statement would be challenged by many men today who are confident that the world—the system in which we live—is as permanent as anything can be. But the world is not permanent. The only sure thing about this world system is that it is not going to be here forever. One day the system will be gone, and the pleasant attractions within it will be gone: all are passing away. What is going to last?

Someone has said—“*The world is passing away?!—forget the ‘world’—WE are passing away!!—How then should we be living in light of this truth?*”

2 Peter 3:11-13 (NKJV)

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Again, Jesus warned us about the transitory nature of this life—that it could be over at any moment and how we should always be living with eternity in our hearts—

Luke 12:15-21 (NKJV)

And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." ¹⁶ Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' ¹⁸ So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry." ' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' ²¹ So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

And so as one author stated—

"John is contrasting two ways of life: a life lived for eternity and a life lived for time. A worldly person lives for the pleasures of the flesh, but a dedicated Christian lives for the joys of the Spirit. A worldly believer lives for what he can see, the lust of the eyes; but a spiritual believer lives for the unseen realities of God (2 Cor. 4:8–18). A worldly-minded person lives for the pride of life, the vainglory that appeals to men; but a Christian who does the will of God lives for God's approval. And he "abides forever."

1 John 2:18 (NKJV)

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

In Scripture, the word '**hour**' can mean a sixty-minute interval of time—or it can mean a non-specific period of time—

John 2:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Jesus said to her, "Woman...My hour has not yet come."

John 4:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

When John used the word '**hour**' here he obviously had in mind an indeterminate period of time, but he used the word *hour* because it communicates the idea of urgency—that time is growing short!

The term "**last hour**" is a eschatological term, a reference to the "last days"—a time just prior to Jesus' Second Coming that will be preceded by the coming of the Antichrist onto the world stage. Again, John underscores the importance and urgency of what he is communicating to his readers when he tells them (and all Christians)—"**It is *the* last hour!**"

The phrase literally reads, "**last hour it is,**" the word order making it an *emphatic* expression.

The "**last hour**" refers to the present evil age—which is one of only two 'ages' talked about in Scripture—

Matthew 12:32 (NKJV)

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

Mark 10:30 (NKJV)

who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.

Ephesians 1:21 (NKJV)

²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

1 John 2:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ **Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.**

When people hear the name “**Antichrist**” they often assume (because the prefix ‘anti’ is thought to always mean ‘against’)—that this coming world dictator will be anti-Christ as in ‘anti-religion’. Or in other words, they perceive that he is going to be the quintessential *atheist* leader (like a Communist dictator).

However, in the Greek the prefix ‘anti’ could also mean ‘*in place of*’—in other words, far from being anti-religion—the Bible teaches that Antichrist will be very religious!

So religious in fact, that he will establish a new religion where he himself is worshipped as God. (Explain)

2 Thessalonians 2:4 (NKJV)

⁴ [the Antichrist] who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Revelation 13:4, 8 (NKJV)

⁴ So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"... ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

It’s interesting that, of the dozen or so titles this world leader is referred to by in Scripture—*Antichrist* isn’t one of them!

John is the only one who uses the word ‘Antichrist’ as a name or title to call him by—and even then we could make the case that John was using the term in a generic or general sense to describe many false teachers who started in the church and went out into the world preaching another Jesus and a different gospel (v.19).

John tells us that “**many antichrists**” had already come into the world in his day “**by which we know that it is the last hour**” he tells us (‘last days’). We know from Scripture that the ‘**last days**’ officially began with Jesus’ First Coming (Heb.1:2)—and will conclude with His Second Coming to establish His Kingdom upon the earth.

The “many antichrists” that John refers to are those false teachers that used Christ and Christianity as a ‘platform’ from which to teach their twisted “anti-Christ” false doctrine.

Paul talked about these men in 2 Corinthians 11 when he said—

2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15 (NLT2)

⁴ You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we

preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed...¹³ These people are false apostles. They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ But I am not surprised! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. In the end they will get the punishment their wicked deeds deserve.

Now, because John said that “**many antichrists**” had already come into the world—there are those Christians who think that John is teaching that the Church would see the coming of THE Antichrist and therefore that John was teaching the Church would be going into the Tribulation Period.

Look once again at what John is saying—

1 John 2:18 (NKJV)

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

John taught them the Antichrist is coming (not that Christians would see him)—but many false teachers (‘antichrists’ to a lesser degree, forerunners to the world leader we call the Antichrist) have come and will continue to come into the world.

The coming of these false teachers and prophets will escalate leading up to the coming of THE Antichrist and culminating with the return of Jesus Christ to the earth—Jesus Himself told us:

Matthew 24:4-5, 11, 23-25 (NKJV)

⁴ ..."Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many...¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many...

²³ Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*. ²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you beforehand. (prophecy keeps us from deception)

How do we know the Church won't see the coming of the Antichrist and therefore will not be going into the Tribulation Period?—turn to Revelation Chapter 4.

As we come to Chapter 4 we come to the final section of the Book of Revelation according to the outline of the book which Jesus Himself gave to us in chap.1 verse 19—

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

- **“Write the things which you have seen...”**—the vision of Jesus in Chapter 1
- **“...and the things which are...”**—the things of the Church (Chapters 2 & 3)
- **“...and the things which will take place after this.”** (‘meta tauta’ —“after these things”)

“After what things?” →After the things concerning the Church or—after the Church Age comes to a close.

The Bible teaches that the Church Age started on Pentecost and will end at the Rapture.

Revelation 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

Verse 1 of Chapter 4 opens and closes with the Greek phrase 'meta tauta' –“*after these things*” which connects 4:1 with 1:19 and tells us we have entered into the final section of the book which covers Chapter 4 through Chapter 22.

Since Chapter 4 can't begin until after the Church Age closes, and the Church Age doesn't officially close until the Rapture—can we see evidence of the Rapture of the Church somewhere between the close of Chapter 3 and the beginning of Chapter 4?

Yes, absolutely!

First of all, we read in verse 1, “**After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven...**”

This takes us back to something Jesus promised the true and faithful church of Philadelphia—

Revelation 3:8 (NKJV)

⁸ I know your works. See, I have set before you an **open door**, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

Revelation 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will **keep you from the hour of trial** which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Jesus promised His true, last days Church that He would keep her from (deliver it out of) the judgment or the Great Tribulation that is coming upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth (unbelievers).

So, this open door could very well be a door of deliverance.

Isaiah 26:19-21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Your dead shall live; *Together with* my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew *is like* the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead.

²⁰ Come, my people, enter your chambers, And shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, Until the indignation is past. ²¹ For behold, the Lord comes out of His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; The earth will also disclose her blood, And will no more cover her slain.

John 14:2-3 (NKJV)

² In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

Secondly John says—“**And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here...’**”

That sounds like Rapture language—

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up (raptured) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:52 (NKJV)

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

The church has been mentioned 19 times in the first 3 Chapters of Revelation but then disappears from the earth and is not seen again in the book until we see her as the Bride of Christ in Chapter 19 returning with the Lord to the earth to establish His Kingdom.

So, the scene now shifts to heaven in chapter 4 where the Church, once seated with Christ in heavenly places *spiritually* (Ephesians 2:6), is now seen safely seated with Christ in heaven *literally* before the judgment of God is poured out upon this Christ rejecting world.

Revelation 5:1-7 (NKJV)

¹ And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. ⁴ So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. ⁵ But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." ⁶ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

Revelation 6:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." ² And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

In the Book of Revelation there are recorded—the 7 Seal Judgments; the 7 Trumpet Judgments; and the final 7 Bowl Judgments.

All of these judgments are called 'the wrath of God' which He pours out on the 'earth-dwellers'—and yet with regard to the Body of Christ—

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NKJV)

⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

If the first seal (wrath or judgment of God) brings the Antichrist to power—if the Antichrist is the first judgment of God during the Tribulation Period, and God has not appointed His Church to judgment or wrath—then the Church won't see the Antichrist come to power.

Daniel 9:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an

end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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