

## **“THE ANTICHRIST.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

**November 18, 2018, 6:00 PM**

**Scripture Texts: I John 2:18-27**

### **Introduction.**

Telling time is important to us Americans since we are so time conscious. In other cultures time and dates and deadlines are not nearly as important and some cultures barely have clocks. I preached at an Apache Indian church in Oklahoma that didn't start until about 20 minutes after the stated hour and even then we started before the pianist arrived.

But there is more to telling time than what a clock or watch tells us. There is knowing the times.

“The Doomsday Clock is a symbol which represents the likelihood of a man-made global catastrophe. Maintained since 1947 by the members of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Science and Security Board, the clock represents an analogy for the threat of global nuclear war” (Wikipedia). It is set once a year at the University of Chicago by a group of scientist.

Right now it is set at two minutes to midnight, two minutes to an apocalypse. They hope this clock will somehow wake people up to the seriousness of the nuclear crisis and that we will do whatever we can to turn the clock back.

There is another kind of knowing the times, a theological or spiritual kind of knowing the times. John also wants to wake us up to the seriousness of the day we live in. Scripture tells us to number our days, and to make the best use of the time for the days are evil; and the end of all time is approaching quickly.

John declares we are living in the last hour. The Theological Clock is set at 11 PM. We are in the last days, the end times. This refers to the time between the first and second coming of Christ. All that remains to be fulfilled is the last

promise, that Christ will come again. In God's way of measuring time, time is running out, it is approaching midnight.

But so much time has passed it is hard for us to maintain vigilance, and some think the promise and the prophecy are false.

Christ never gave a date. And in the scope of eternity, these two thousand years have only been a moment, a blink of an eye.

**II Peter 3:8-9** But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

The reason John says this is because of the rise of many antichrists. This is the clear evidence we are in the last days before the final Antichrist comes at the end of the last hour.

### **The Antichrists.**

Now we need to understand the meaning of antichrists because it has been muddied by strange books, movies, prophecy experts and countless guesses at who the antichrist is from Henry Kissinger to several presidents to the Pope to Vladimir Putin.

Several years ago a poll was done in which 19% of all Americans believed the final Antichrist was already alive on earth.

The word antichrist appears only four times in the NT and only in John's letters. But that doesn't mean it isn't an important concept. Daniel spoke of a coming prince. Paul mentions a man of lawlessness, the son of destruction in II Thessalonians.

John's warning is not just about one end time individual but of many antichrists who have gone out from the church. Antichrist has three meanings in this letter.

The antichrist is a spirit of the age, a spirit of unbelief in our culture (I John 4:3).

The antichrists are false teachers who embody with spirit and who spread false teaching concerning Christ. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

The Antichrist is a person who will lead the final rebellion against Christ before Christ comes.

Those who just focus or obsess on who the Antichrist will be, miss an important truth and warning. There is already a spirit of the antichrist in our age, and there are already many antichrists among us.

**II John 1:7** For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Since Pentecost to now there have always been antichrists in every stage of history. There will be many individuals and many sects, groups who are deceived and deny Christ.

Who are they and what do they do? *John gives three marks of these antichrists.*

They depart, they deny, and they deceive.

*They depart from the church, vs. 18-19.*

They abandon the Church of Christ. Some famous examples.

Joseph Smith started out in a Christian church before going off into Mormonism. Charles Taze Russell grew up in a Christian home and church before starting Jehovah Witnesses.

Mary Bakker Eddy grew up in a Christian home and church before starting Church of Christ, Scientists.

Not everyone in the church belongs to Christ, there are wheat and tares. You can be a member of a local church but not be a member of the spiritual Body of Christ. There are counterfeit Christians, those who say "Lord, Lord" but are not known by Jesus.

The greatest dangers to the church are from the inside. The waters of our culture slowly leaking into the church. Surely you have noticed that whatever the culture is promoting now, is accepted in the church about 10 to 20 years later.

Satan is the master of the Trojan Horse strategy.

The church is Christ's threshing floor where the chaff is exposed and blown away so that in the end the pure wheat will remain.

They are exposed by their denial of Jesus as the Son of God, either in their words or actions. Some deny him in their beliefs, teachings, and doctrine.

They are in every denomination and in every church.

What is more painful, when the church is attacked by outsiders, or when those on the inside join the attack? It is never good to have wolves in the sheep pen.

John is a good pastor, he is warning the sheep of the presence of wolves. We must learn to recognize them and then drive them away. There are imposters and seducers all around.

One of saddest realities we all face, is those who were among us and have departed because they have no interest in Jesus. Some parents know the heartache of a child who professed a faith in Christ for a time and then departed from it.

Let me encourage you to never cease praying. If they belong to Christ then He will restore them. Those who have a living root in the soil of God's Word and are sealed by the Holy Spirit cannot be lost. Where God's calling has been effectual, perseverance is certain.

**John 6:37** All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

**John 10:28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

*They deny Jesus. They are liars about who Jesus is, vss. 20-25.*

They may not be direct, but may reimagine Jesus, the way cults do. He is a son of God, just not the only Son of God. He died on the cross as a martyr not as the Messiah.

They reduce Jesus to a mere man, a great teacher, an important thinker, a great advocate for social justice, a good man but nevertheless only a man.

**I John 4:3** Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

All cults, sects, false religions, have at their core a denial of Jesus as the Son of God. This is the point of departure. This what makes them liars. This is the key mark of an antichrist, one who is anti-Christ.

The doctrinal test is really the Christological test. That is the one key doctrine they oppose.

And since the Father and the Son cannot be separated, to cast off the Son is to cast off the Father. The Son is the one who makes the invisible Father known. Jesus is the way to the Father, so to deny Jesus is to close off access to the Father.

### ***They deceive the church and Christians***

A Christian speaks and believes under the influence of the Holy Spirit. A false teacher speaks and deceives under the influence of the spirit of error, the spirit of the antichrist.

They are subtle, they seek to wear down and erode the faith of the believers, to create a lack of confidence in the truth of Scripture. They say again and again about different truths in Scripture, “Did God really say that? Did God really mean that?”

The antichrists are both persons and principles. So we must be alert and on guard not just against individuals who might lead us astray, but ideas and teachings and worldviews that will lead us astray.

One of the chief examples in our culture is the temptation for Christians and the church to redefine sexual purity according to the shifting standards of morality.

Wake up, pay attention, don't be naïve, we are living in an age of great deception, it calls for great vigilance and wisdom. It calls for something else.

How can Christians resist and stand against the teachings of the antichrists?

### **The Abiding in Christ.**

The only way you can know and confess and abide in Christ is to abide in the Word of God and to have His Holy Spirit. The Word and the Spirit work together to protect us and guard our hearts.

Vs. 20 says that we know the truth because we have the Spirit. Without the Spirit we cannot know the Truth, and knowing the truth is a gift from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit doesn't enable us to know just any truth, but the truth that was from the beginning, the truth passed on by the prophets and the apostles.

John calls the Spirit, the Spirit of Truth (4:6; 5:6) for good reason. The key gift we receive from the Spirit is the truth, and no teaching of the Spirit will ever contradict Jesus or the Bible.

**John 14:16-17** I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

**John 16:13-14** When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

If anyone comes along and contradicts Jesus or the Bible, they do not have the Spirit of Truth.

In this whole passage there are only *two imperatives*, two things we are told to do.

24 *Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you.* If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.

27 But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, *abide in him.*

Abide in the Word. Love the Word, seek the Word, be filled with the Word.  
Abide in the Spirit. Love the Holy Spirit, seek the Spirit, be filled with the Spirit.

Those who abide in the Spirit abide in Christ, confess Christ, believe Christ, abide in the fellowship of believers, abide in the truth, walk in the light, obey the commandments, continue in the Word of God.

We must have a commitment to truth in our church and in our dealings with each other. Speaking the truth in love, maintaining a unity of the Spirit in a spirit of truth.

Here John wants to give an encouraging word in case his strong words make some of the believers question their own faith. The anointing you have received abides in you.

*Anointed.* That's not a word we use much. We might refer to a preacher or a special song or a message as anointed. We might hear it used of a particular event or charismatic person.

In the OT prophets, priests and kings were anointed with oil as a sign of their official office. In the NT Jesus fulfills all those offices, He is the anointed prophet, priest and king.

So what is John referring to?

He is referring to the Anointed One now dwelling in us by His Holy Spirit. We have the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

**II Corinthians 1:21-22** It is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

HC Q.32. BUT WHY ARE YOU CALLED A CHRISTIAN?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ and so I share in his anointing. I am anointed to confess his name, to present myself as a living sacrifice of thanks, to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for all eternity.

We are not anointed with oil for our bodies, but with the Spirit for our souls to give us wisdom and protect us from error. This enables us to stand and to resist the lies of the enemy.

Trust in and rest in the anointing you have received from the Holy Spirit, by whom you have made a good confess and hold fast to what you have heard from the beginning.

Therefore don't grow weary in well doing, for in due time you will received the reward of the crown of righteousness, which is to say the joy of God's presence and the enjoyment of God Himself.

You know these things but they bear repeating because of the relentless lies and deception of the evil one, the lure of countless idols, the lies of the spirit of the age.

**Mark 13:13** You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

**Revelation 3:11** I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

**Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.