

I'm continually amazed at the hand of God in daily life. I guess I didn't notice it as much when I was younger. I'm sure He was always working, but perhaps it becomes more noticeable when we align ourselves with His will. Is it because we become more usable, in other words, less resistant to what He would do through us? Or maybe we become more in tune to recognize it. In any case, I'm just thrilled to see God at work and know that He includes us in what He is doing. I probably would not have attended the workshop I went to if I had known more about it, and yet it was perfect preparation for the sermon on this passage. It was also very helpful for some of the things I needed to address in the book I'm working on, *John's Rabbi*.

My impression had been that the world of scholarly criticism of the Bible was losing steam. It really thrived in the last century, but recent discoveries in archeology and thoughtful opposing arguments have exposed some of their theories to be completely unfounded and intentionally biased. Then I went to the workshop. There, it was assumed that John was unreliable and we should all just accept that fact. Let me give you a little sneak preview from the preface of *John's Rabbi*.

Some scholars object to John's account as it is so clearly theological. In other words, they believe that John embellished the story to get across theological points. In the first four chapters of David Flusser's book, *Jesus*, he tells his readers eight times that John is less reliable historically than the synoptic gospels. One wonders why he feels such a need to repeat the point. Yet in those same chapters he refers to the same Gospel to prove three of his historical points. Perhaps the problem is that John so clearly recalls the stories that point to Jesus as divine.

Commented [notes1]: David Flusser, *Jesus*, pgs 19,20,27,29,33,47,62,73

Commented [notes2]: ibid. pgs 25,26,35

As far as historicity is concerned, most scholars agree that a Galilean disciple memorized the sayings of their master. To distort or lie about the words or events in their master's life would be anathema. In fact, John emphasized that he was teaching truth. He tells us that Jesus said, "The truth shall set you free" and "the devil is a liar from the beginning" (John 8:44). John warns us that "no lie is of the truth" (1John 2:21). To then say that he was making up stories (historically unreliable) is to say that Jesus chose a blatant liar to be among his inner three that would convey his teaching. You won't hear any of the scholars bold enough to make that assertion, and yet that seems to be the conclusion to which they would point us. (What is the motivation behind this?)

In our passage today, the disciple that Jesus loved warned the churches that antichrists were multiplying. ¹⁸ *Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.* Let us first examine how he addressed them. When we studied the last chapter of John's Gospel, we saw Jesus call out from the shore, "Hey kids!" (*paidion*) Here John does what a good disciple does, he imitates his master. He writes those who are learning under him in the same way. It is a term of endearment. (John 21:5)

Commented [notes3]: 5 He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.
John 21:5 (NIV)

Christianity was unique in the world of that time in that it taught of a God who loved people, who wanted to be intimately involved with them, and expected them to be the same toward one another. (John 13:15) The only other loving deity was Isis,

Commented [notes4]: 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.
John 13:15 (NIV)

who was said to love those who worshiped her, but that didn't translate into them loving each other. The Judeo-Christian God expects us to be like Him. He is the standard for right living.

Greco-Roman teaching suggested that to not be too involved or attached to others was exemplary. One Roman teacher of morality, Seneca, even taught that to not be disturbed by others was the ideal. Christianity, with its joy in service to others, was a radical change from the status quo. It still is! The true shepherds love their flock and lay down their lives for them. The true followers of Jesus love one another, and that will always be a radical difference from the way of the world. (John 13:35)

John reminds them that the antichrist is coming. Jewish apocalyptic writing also mentions a usurper that sets up a false kingdom of god. Jesus warned of false-christs three times in His teaching on the last days. (Mathew 24:24) But John goes on to say that many antichrists are already around. He defines them as someone who denies Jesus is Messiah (verse 22), denies Father and Son, does not acknowledge Jesus is from God (4:3), or that He came in the flesh (2Jn 7). By that definition our world is full of antichrists. Our higher learning institutions are full of antichrists. Our city is full of antichrists. Our seminaries are full of antichrists, and sadly many churches in America are led by antichrists. Are you getting an idea why they don't want to bother with John and his theology?

John writes that the presence of antichrists is how we know it is the last hour. The coming of Messiah and the declaration of His work ushered in the Kingdom of God. It is now and it is yet to come. The time between the first and second coming of Jesus is the last hour or the end times. Without Christ, there couldn't be antichrists. Without the manifestation of God in the incarnation, there couldn't be those who clearly denied Him. Now that He has been revealed and proved His words with miracles, especially the miracle of resurrection, the world is without excuse. (John 15:23) Those who oppose Him are antichrists. That is how we know we are in the end times, the last hour. There are a few passages that describe this time. See if it doesn't sound familiar.

The end times are described as terrible times (2Timothy 3:1), with people hoarding wealth (James 5:3), with scoffers who follow their own evil desires (2Peter 3:3; Jude 18), and as this passage declares, with those who deny that Jesus is the Messiah from God.

There is some speculation that the next verse is referring to Cerinthus and others who followed him and left the church. We can't tell for sure, but it does sound like there was some kind of proto-Gnostic movement that split the church in Asia. The Gnostics didn't really formally exist until after John, but the ideas were definitely around. ¹⁹ *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.* John tells us that those who left for the so-called secret wisdom, the antichrists, were never really a part of the body. (Revelation 2:2) Jesus keeps His sheep. (John 17:12) So if they left the fellowship of believers for

Commented [notes5]: ... whatever He does He commands Israel to perform. (Exod. R. xxx, 9)

Commented [notes6]: 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. Matt 24:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 22 Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. 1 John 4:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 7 Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. 2 John 1:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. John 15:22 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 Tim 3:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. James 5:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 2 Peter 3:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 18 They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires." Jude 1:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. Rev 2:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: John 17:12 (NIV) 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

some new wave of thought that used Christian language but gave permission for sensual indulgence, then they were never truly born-again.

Jesus told the disciples that the tares would always be among the wheat. (Matthew 13:24-26) Tares look like wheat, but when the head of grain appears you can tell they are merely a weed sucking up the nutrients and taking up space in the field of God. John is telling us that it is good that they left because then we can know they weren't part of the body of believers. (Luke 12:2)

We have had some come and go through Wayside. It breaks my heart when they go, as I hoped and prayed they would come to accept the truth. But as sad as it is, it is better that they do go. They love the world. They are antichrist. (1Corinthians 11:19) Unity is a high priority, but there can be no unity without agreement on the essentials of the Gospel.

We dare not take this too far and say that everyone that leaves this church is reprobate. Thank the Lord we have a dozen flavors of Christianity, because we are fickle children. Some will grow better in this congregation and some in another. There are a number of good churches in the area. But if someone leaves and avoids the body of Christ or goes to some perversion of Christianity, especially those that appeal to pride or sensual indulgence (Revelation 2:14-15, 20), then we can know they were never of us.

True believers walk in the truth and remain in fellowship. (Mark 13:13) Babes may give in to the flesh, but eventually they will grow and change, sometimes in another congregation that is able to help them through their struggle with the flesh.

²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. Some translations end this verse with "you know all things". Obviously we don't know all things. Only God knows all things. The point John is making is that we know the Apostle's Doctrine, the truth. We know the basics. We understand who Jesus is and why He came. We have entered into the New Covenant with Him and have an anointing, the presence of the Holy Spirit to help us discern truth from error.

This is identical to the teaching of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (NIV) ²¹ *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, ²² set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

Jesus said in John 14:26 (NIV) ²⁶ *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* The Spirit is our inner alarm that tells us something is wrong with a teaching or confirms that it is according to God's word (truth). We don't have to rely on an individual who can fail but on the unfailing Spirit of the Living God. We need both the Word and the Spirit.

John is telling the congregations that the so called secret teachings of those that left the church will not benefit them in any way. They have the Holy Spirit that confirms

Commented [notes18]: 24 Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. Matt 13:24-26 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. Luke 12:2 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 1 Cor 11:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. 15 Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Rev 2:14-15 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. Rev 2:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 13 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. Mark 13:13 (NIV)

in their heart that the new teaching is false. The new teaching may be seductive, but the Spirit within them rejects it, so they must reject it as well.

²¹ *I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.* The new teaching is a lie. If they accepted the lie, it would mean they didn't have the Holy Spirit residing in them. The true believers know the new teachings are a lie. They didn't leave with those who went out from them. There would be no reason to write to the ones that left for they accept the lie and obviously do not have the Spirit. This was another assurance to the church that they need not fear their standing with God.

I wouldn't go over this passage with those that left us to go to some perversion of Christianity. They wouldn't receive it. The Spirit does not reside in them to confirm to them that it is truth. I'd be wasting their time and mine and making them even more accountable in the Day of Judgment.

I began the message telling you why some reject John. They won't come out and call him a liar, but that is certainly what is implied. Well, perhaps it is because John called them a liar first. ²² *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son.* When John says they deny Jesus is the Christ, he means all that the Messiah had come to mean to the early church, Savior, Redeemer, atoning sacrifice, and the only way to God. He does not mean his culture's concept of messiah, a new king David that is merely a man. Jesus helped the disciples get a fuller understanding of the prophecies of Messiah in some of his post-resurrection appearances. (Luke 24:27) With that understanding, we can see our world is full of liars, antichrists.

Why is John so dogmatic as to call them liars? Because he was standing in the room when Jesus, the man he had seen brutally murdered, stood before the disciples, showed His wounds and talked with them. After living with Him for 3 years, seeing the miracles, hearing His words, the resurrection was the clincher. But that isn't all! There was the ascension and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. No wonder he is so dogmatic! You would be too if you had been there.

A disciple of John, Polycarp, passed on a saying that probably came from John. "Whoever shall not confess the testimony of the Cross, is of the devil; and whosoever shall pervert the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and say that there is neither resurrection or judgment, that man is the firstborn of Satan." This is the essence of what John is writing when he says a liar is the one that denies Jesus is the Christ. It sounds harsh, but consider the consequences of the antichrists' teachings.

John adds that ²³ *No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.* Since the new teachings deny the essence of who the Son is, there is no way they know God. Denying Jesus' work and ministry is denying the One that sent Him. We hear people say that they believe in God, but not the exclusivity of Jesus. If God sent Jesus to be THE way for man to get right with God, we don't have the option of saying, "I'll find another way to get

Commented [notes24]: 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. Luke 24:27 (NIV)

to God." Deny the Son and you do not have the Father. Acknowledge Jesus' work and ministry and you are in relationship with the Father, for that is what Jesus came to make possible. (Matthew 11:27)

24 See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. The Apostles taught what Jesus taught them. They passed on His life and words. That is where we need to stay. It is in these rich truths that we must persevere. (Acts 2:42) As for those who say they've moved on passed the stage of Christianity, they never knew Jesus in the first place, so how could they move on? (2John 9) The basics are the good stuff, shallow enough for babes to play in but deep enough that scholars never fully plumb its depths. Yes, we should mature and move past milk to the meat, but the baby calf puts on meat by drinking its mama's milk. (Sounds like a Vernon McGee quote) The meat of the word is just a greater understanding of the milk of the word. It is what we saw in the message Spiritual Growth. The babes know God, but the Fathers know Him in a deeper and richer way. (1John 2:13b-14a)

25 And this is what he promised us--even eternal life. To abandon the basics is to abandon life eternal. This is the incentive to continue. Prideful knowledge is the motivation of some, but that does not lead to eternal life (boasting of what you have and do) but is worldly. Life, like the kingdom of God, is not only in the future but is for now. The presence of the Holy Spirit that guides us into all truth is our assurance. We have life now and in the world to come. (Deuteronomy 30:6)

26 I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. John gives a reminder of why he is writing. There will always be false teachers among us trying to lead people away after themselves. It is one reason your elders are always cautious and thoroughly check out ministries that come in from the outside, and those that spring up within the body but not at the direction of the elders. They can be very helpful or very harmful. It is the elders' duty to discern which. (1Peter 5:2)

27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him. The presence of the Holy Spirit gives you a check in your spirit. Listen to Him! John is not telling us we don't need teachers. That is one of the offices of the church. (Ephesians 4:11) He used a figure of speech that implied the Holy Spirit is enough to inform them, what is faithful to God's word and what is not, in every circumstance. We need both the objective Word of God and the subjective Spirit of God. He always teaches us to remain in Jesus. He will never direct us to some new interpretation of Jesus' life that is unfaithful to all four Gospels. He will never deny Jesus is the Lamb of God who loved us and gave Himself to be our ransom. (Matthew 20:28)

You have an anointing. It's the real thing! The world has nothing lasting to offer us. Are you letting Him teach you each day about all things? Are you remaining in Him?

Commented [notes25]: 27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
Matt 11:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
Acts 2:42 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 9 Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.
2 John 1:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.
14 I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.
1 John 2:13-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.
Deut 30:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.
1 Peter 5:2-3 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,
Eph 4:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Matt 20:28 (NIV)