

Walking in the Light: Refusing to Accept Antichrists



SABBATH—AUGUST 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 15:4–10; Acts 2:15–17; Hebrews 1:1, 2; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; 1 John 2:18–29; 1 John 4:1–6.

MEMORY VERSE: “Those who say no to the Son don’t [do not] belong to the Father. But anyone who says yes to the Son belongs to the Father also” (1 John 2:23, NIV).

FROM THE EARLIEST DAY, THE CHURCH HAD TO SOLVE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY FALSE TEACHINGS. Paul had warned the leaders of the church in Ephesus against “savage wolves”¹ who would attack “the flock.”² He had written against false teachers in the church who would lead church members away from truth (Acts 20:29, 30, NKJV). Jesus, too, had warned of false christs and false prophets (Matthew 24:5, 11, 24). Today, the church faces the same thing.

In Revelation 13 the sea beast is pictured as a false christ. So, Bible thinkers have called this beast the antichrist (*anti* in Greek means “in place of”). In his first letter, John also talks about the antichrist(s). Who are these people? What do they teach?

This week we study what John was talking about and try to learn lessons from it for ourselves today.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What is the “last hour” (1 John 2:18, NIV)? What danger is John warning his readers about? Is there a difference between the *antichrist* and *antichrists*? What does John mean about us staying in Christ? How are Christians to test the spirit?

1. savage wolves—false leaders or teachers.

2. flock—church group.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 2

**“THE LAST HOUR”
(1 John 2:18, NIV)**

At the end of 1 John 2, John starts to speak about the group or groups that had been causing problems for his church members. In their false work, John recognizes that “the last hour” has come.

John talks about “the last hour” around the end of the first century A.D. Almost two thousand years later, how are we to understand what John means? Read about “the last days” in Acts 2:15–17 (NIV); Hebrews 1:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:20; and 1 John 2:18.

The wording “the last hour” shows up only here in 1 John 2 (NIV; NKJV). In the New Testament, other writers have used the wording “the last days” to mean the time since Jesus’ first coming.

With Jesus a new time period had arrived. “The last days” means the entire period between Christ’s first and second comings. So, John’s “last hour” may be his way of meaning the same thing as “the last days.” This is the period between the first and second coming of Jesus.

Jesus Himself had used the word *hour* in John 4:23 (NKJV) and 16:2 (NASB). (In some versions *hour* is translated “time.”) Jesus is pointing to a certain period of time in the future, but before His return. John seems to use the wording “the last hour” in this same way too.

It is important to notice John does



The last hour may be John’s way of meaning that the last days are the period of time between the first and second coming of Jesus.

not set a date. John also does not describe a careful schedule of events that must happen before the Lord would come. That is not John’s point. Instead, he points to the need to be watchful and careful. This is because false teachers are out there, just as Jesus Himself had warned about.

If John was impressed back then to warn about the dangers of “the last hour,” what about us today? What kinds of false teachings do we face, both in and out of the church? How can we protect ourselves from these false teachings?

MONDAY—AUGUST 3

**THE COMING OF ANTICHRISTS
(1 John 2:18, 19, 22, 23)**

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According to 1 John 2:18, 19, 22, who is an antichrist?

The word *antichrist* is used in 1 and 2 John only. An antichrist tries to take Christ's place. He is an enemy of Christ. Bible thinkers of different churches have called the sea beast of Revelation 13 an "antichrist" and the man of lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2 as well. This is the correct name because the language used in Revelation 13:2–4 shows this sea beast is a false copy of Christ, the Lamb. In 2 Thessalonians 2:4, the antichrist, who is the man of lawlessness, tries to take the place of the Lord.



The sea beast of Revelation 13 is a false copy of Christ, the Lamb.

In 1 John 2:18, John speaks of *antichrist* as one or many. The antichrist is supposed to come. Many antichrists have already appeared. Does John give up the idea of one special antichrist by calling other people anti-

christ? This is not true! First John 4:3 is helpful. The verse talks about the spirit of the antichrist: these people show the spirit of the antichrist, but the real antichrist was still to come.

According to 1 John 4:3 and 2 John 7, why would John call those people antichrists who do not have a correct understanding of who Christ is?

John may not call "antichrists" those members of his church who were wrestling with a correct understanding of Jesus or who were influenced by¹ the false teachings. They had to make a decision (choice) between the teaching of Christianity and the opinion of the antichrists about Jesus as the Messiah.

But there were people who had left the church and successfully preached false doctrines (1 John 4:5). These were the antichrists.

Anything that takes the place of the true God in our lives can be an antichrist. What are some of the antichrists we face in our lives today? How can we recognize them? And how can we prevent their power from influencing us?

TUESDAY—AUGUST 4

TESTING SPIRITS (1 John 4:1–6)

In 1 John 4:1–6, John picks up again on the theme (topic) he was writing about in 1 John 2:18–27. This

3. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

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is the theme of false teachings being spread among early Christians. How interesting that so soon among the church the enemy was working and trying to divide the believers through the spreading of false teachings. Even today, we as Seventh-day Adventists have to struggle with false teachings that divide us.

How does 1 John 2:19 connect with us as Seventh-day Adventists today?

We do not know what really happened. But John seems to be struggling with different false teachings about Jesus given by many of these former members. A false teacher may have taught that Christ had seemed to be a human being (person) but really was not. Another may have taught that Christ entered the human being Jesus at baptism and left Him before He was put to death on the cross. Still others may have refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah (Chosen One).

These false teachers might have claimed to be led by the Holy Spirit. This is why John warned about false prophets (messengers) in 1 John 4:1. But their false ideas proved they were influenced by the spirit of the antichrist.

Even among the warnings about the antichrist and their false teachings, what positive hope does John

give to his readers in 1 John 2:18–27 and 1 John 4:1–6?

In both 1 John 2:21 and 1 John 4:6, a great defense against these errors is a knowledge of God, a knowledge of the truth. John is pointing out that it is important to have a correct understanding of the teaching, especially about Jesus. Here is very clear Bible proof that having the correct doctrine (belief) is important.

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 5

THE ANOINTING⁴ (1 John 2:20, 21, 27)

Many people have understood that the “anointing” in 1 John 2:20 (NKJV) means the leading of the Holy Spirit. How do 1 Samuel 16:13; John 14:17; John 15:26; John 16:7; and 1 John 2:20, 21, 27 help support that conclusion?

True believers have received the anointing, which remains in them, teaches them, and is not false. The anointing and how it works may remind readers of Jesus’ statements about the Holy Spirit in His farewell speeches (John 13–16). Already Isaiah 61:1 connects being anointed with the Holy Spirit. So, the anointing stands for the Holy Spirit.

But there is also another thought. First John 2:24 is almost the same as verse 27:

4. anointing—a special ceremony making a person an official leader for ministry to the people. It also means the Holy Spirit’s leading.

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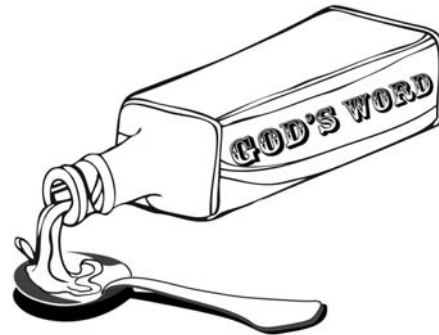
“As for you, let that *abide* [remain] in you which you heard from the beginning” (1 John 2:24, NASB; emphasis supplied).

“As for you, the anointing which you received from Him *abides in you*” (verse 27, NASB; emphasis supplied).

What the true believers have heard from the beginning is the gospel (good news) of Jesus. The Word of God (1 John 2:14) and the truth (2 John 2) abide (remain) in the Christian. In 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22, the anointing by God is connected with the sealing by the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13, hearing the word of truth and believing leads to the sealing by the Holy Spirit. So, the anointing may also point to the Bible.

The “medicine” to heal us from the false messages of the antichrists is God’s Word as spoken by the Holy Spirit. It is the basis on which doctrines can be tested. True believers depend on the Holy Spirit as He shows Himself in the Bible. The Bible has to be the final Word on all our teachings. As soon as believers start to doubt the authority (power) of the Bible, they start opening themselves up to all kinds of doubts and errors. The world is filled with folk who, once strong Christians, have left their faith. This is because they did not understand some things and started questioning the truth of the Bible. We may admit there are things in the Bible we do not understand. But it can be very

serious if we doubt the authority of the Bible because of what we do not understand.



The “medicine” to heal us from the false messages of the antichrists is God’s Word.

What is your attitude (feeling) toward things in the Word of God that you do not understand or do not even like? Have you found yourself doubting more and more in the Word? If so, how can you stop doubting?

THURSDAY—AUGUST 6

ABIDING (REMAINING) IN HIM (John 5:38)

What is the one common theme found in John 5:38; John 6:56; John 8:31; John 15:4–10; 1 John 2:14, 28; and 2 John 9? Why is this message so important to us?

The word *abide* also has been translated as “to remain,” “to live in,” “to dwell in.” It is an important idea in the book of John and in his letters. It shows up 25 times in 1 John and two times in 2 John.

The idea shows it is important to

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remain in the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. A right relationship with the Godhead is very important. It also is important to remain in correct doctrine and in the Word. This is because that will influence our relationship with God. That seems to be a very important part of John's letter. This is because John is afraid of what these false teachers could do to the faith of the believer.

One of the promises made to those who remain in Jesus is the promise of eternal (forever; without end) life. Why is the promise of eternal life so important to us? What would our faith offer us if we did not have that promise? Why should we even continue being Christians at all, according to 1 Corinthians 15:1–19?

To John an important part of the Christian faith was abiding (remaining) in the Lord. This is another way of saying we need to walk in the light. We need to live in a close relationship with Jesus. This means a daily surrender⁵ of our will to God's. We must follow God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. What happens if we start disobeying the Lord? What if we start thinking differently from God? What if we start making negative judgments on whatever parts of the Bible we do not like? Then we are separating ourselves from a saving relationship with Jesus.

5. surrender—the act of giving oneself completely.

6. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.



To abide (remain) in the Lord means we need to walk in the light.

How do you abide in Christ? What were the things you did in the past 24 hours that helped you to abide in Him? Make a list of things we can do that are part of what it means “to abide” in Christ. Then share your list with members on Sabbath.

FRIDAY—AUGUST 7

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read 2 Peter 2 and Ellen G. White, “Worldliness in the Church,” pages 196, 197, in *Testimonies*⁴ for the Church, volume 2.

One could bring up the question why 1 John 2:29 is important in this discussion about false teachers. Clearly, a false lifestyle went along with the false teachings about Jesus. This is often true today. Attacking one doctrine of Christianity leads to questioning others. Then people no longer live righteous (holy) lives. A terrible cycle begins, and they go on a steady, downward path toward self-

destruction. But that can be stopped only by returning to the Lord, His teachings, and His perfect life.

“The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be given—in place of the Bible. This is because the Bible clearly shows that the Bible is God’s standard. All teaching and experience must be tested by that standard. The apostle John says, ‘Do not believe every spirit. Put the spirits to the test to see if they belong to God. Many false prophets [messengers] have gone out into the world.’ 1 John 4:1, NIV.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, page 9.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ How do we as Seventh-day Adventists, who have long been expecting the return of Jesus, understand how to be living in “the last hour”? If “the last hour” has lasted almost two thousand years, what is it supposed to mean to us today?
- ❷ What is on the list that you made from Thursday’s lesson and how is it showing the useful ways in which we can abide in Christ? What can you learn from one another?
- ❸ What are ways we can show the spirit of antichrist toward others?
- ❹ What are some of the difficult things in the Bible that church members sometimes do not understand? How can we learn to trust the Bible, even though we have these difficulties? How can we help those who are struggling with their faith because of things in the Bible they do not understand or like?
- ❺ How should we as a church act toward those former members who now openly attack us? What should our attitudes (feelings) be toward them?