



1 John 2.18-27 Living with opposition

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This section of John's letter is about conflict: ²⁶**I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray** and v18 refers to **antichrists** and **the last hour**.

The last hour and the antichrists

'the last hour' is a more dramatic version of 'the last days' Heb 1.1-2a, Acts 2.17 begun by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus which brought to an end the whole era of God's dealings with mankind as described in what we call the OT. The first coming of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit had changed everything. We are now in the last days looking for the Second Coming of Christ that will conclude everything. 2000 years may seem long to us but note 2 Pet 3.7 and Mat 24.36. John says that a sign of it being the last hour is the activity of people he calls **antichrists** v18 whose error is defined in v22. It is still today the key area of opposition to Christ. You can't pretend that you are a worshipper of God the Father and deny that the Son is God v23.

The opposition – the Gnostics

His letter seems to be aimed at people known as the **Gnostics**, led by a man called Cerinthus. 'A characteristic of the Gnostics was the claim to a secret knowledge known only to a select group.' (New Bible Commentary p 1154). They also believed that matter is evil, so God could not become Man. Some Gnostics believed that once you had been initiated into their 'higher knowledge' you no longer needed to worry about what you did with your body which was material and therefore evil anyway. This led to wild immorality (Rev 2.6, 14-15) and hence John's emphasis in 1v6 and in other places. The antichrists identified themselves by abandoning the fellowship of those who believed in the deity of Jesus v19.

The source of the truth

The real source of knowledge about God is **the anointing v20 promised by Jesus** in Jn 14.16-17a,26 At Pentecost God fulfilled this promise of Jesus when the Holy Spirit came down upon the disciples, so v21. Truth – doctrine - is vital and there is a huge emphasis on the teaching of sound doctrine in the New Testament 2 Cor 10.5, 1 Tim 4.11-14, etc.

Doctrine and experience

Some Christians put great emphasis on experience, and of course without experience doctrine is just a theory. But how we regard that experience – whatever it is – depends entirely on what we believe about it, that is, on the doctrine we accept. John urges the Christians to stick to what they have heard right from the

start, that is, the gospel v24-25, and in v27 **his anointing teaches you about all things**. The concept of going further into some new and special knowledge is entirely wrong.

Conclusions

- 1 The incarnation is still a Big Issue v22.
- 2 Teaching the truth of God (doctrine) from the Bible must be at the heart of our church life.
- 3 We must take care that v24 we stay with the gospel.
- 4 We can rejoice in the fact that v25 **this is what he promised us—eternal life**.
What could be better than that?