

1 John 2:18-20 | Sunday January 4, 2026

As we study 1 John one thing that stands out is the stark comparison between the light and the darkness. Chapter 1:5 declares that “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” This truth does not open up the door to half-light, or just a little darkness. God is light and we either walk in fellowship in the light or we walk in the darkness, but not both at the same time (1:6). This teaching is real to life because we can experience restoration to the light when we confess our sins to God (1:9). Through Jesus’ blood we are initially brought into the light and then can be continually restored to the light. We need this restoration because we are so prone to loving the darkness and going back to it. The lust of the our old sin nature stands opposed to God and keeps trying to draw us back to the darkness. If a believer thinks they are too spiritual or mature to be influenced by the dark world then they do not understand the depth of their old sin nature. The great news is that our struggle to go back to the darkness is not permanent.

1 John 2:8; 15-17 ESV

(8) At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in Him and in you, **because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.**

(15) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

(16) For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

(17) And **the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.**

John is comparing the dying dark world with the eternal light of God. He is encouraging us to weigh which one is worth living for. The verb for passing away is in the **passive voice** which means this is an action that is being forced onto the world. The world does not want to pass away. **Yet, God is enacting His will and is bringing the dark world to an end.** The world does not have a choice in the matter. Yet as believers we have a choice to live for what abides forever.

Isaiah 40:6-8 ESV

(6) A voice says, “Cry!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” **All flesh** is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

(7) **The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it;** surely the people are grass.

(8) The grass withers, the flower fades, **but the word of our God will stand forever.**

All humanity has to offer, all its beauty and lusts, are withering and will fade away when God acts. **His word, His truth, His light is what will stand forever.** John wants to prepare believers for what to expect in the dark world as it passes away.

1 John 2:18-22 ESV

(18) Children, **it is the last hour**, and as you have heard **that antichrist is coming**, so now many antichrists have come. **Therefore we know that it is the last hour.**

(19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

(20) But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

(21) I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

(22) Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? **This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.**

John wants us to know where we are in the timeline of the world passing away. It is the last hour. John wrote this over 1900 years ago and yet it still holds true. In the Greek **last hour does not have an article**. It is not specifically the very final hour, but a description of the entire age we are in.

1 John 2:18 Wuest Expanded New Testament

(18) Little children under instruction, **it is a last hour in character**. And even as you heard that **Antichrist comes**, even now, **antichrists, many of them, have arisen and are here**; from which fact **we know by experience that it is a last hour in character**.

The time John lived in and **the time we live in is characterized, or described as the last hour**. This means all believers are to live with the real expectation that Jesus could come back at any moment in their lifetime. You might be wondering, how do we know it is the last hour? What will the last hour look like? **We know it is the last hour because of the many antichrists who have arisen**. Verse 22 tells us these antichrists deny the Father and the Son. They change a fundamental truth about who God is and who Jesus is and alter the gospel. **When we see false teachers denying Jesus we can know it is still the last hour**.

1 Timothy 4:1 ESV

(1) Now the Spirit expressly says that **in later times some will depart from the faith** by devoting themselves **to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons**,

2 Timothy 3:1-2 ESV

(1) But understand this, **that in the last days there will come times of difficulty**.

(2) For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2 Timothy 4:3-4 ESV

(3) **For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching**, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

(4) and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

This season of the last hour is going to be full of false teaching. It is so bad what is taught is motivated by demons. Anything that changes Jesus and changes the gospel in a fundamental way so that a saving message is not shared is satanically inspired. In the last hour, we are **not** to expect things to get progressively better or to expect the truth to be more accepted. We are to expect the opposite. Which makes the state of the world oddly encouraging, **it is exactly what God said it would be before Jesus return!**

John makes the distinction between these false teaching antichrists and the singular Antichrist who is to come. Antichrist does not have an article but is used as a proper name. He is the one that is often talked about in prophecy and is “the little horn” (Dan 7:8), and “the beast” (Rev 11:7). **Anti** can mean **against, opposed**, but also means **instead of**. The future Antichrist will be **opposed to Jesus and His truth and at the same time offer himself as a replacement**. The little

antichrist, who are false teachers were present in John's day and are still here today. The one Antichrist is currently being restrained, until it is his time.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 ESV

- (1) Now concerning **the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him**, we ask you, brothers,
- (2) not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect **that the day of the Lord has come**.

The Thessalonians were worried because someone told them that the day of the Lord had come. The day of the Lord refers to a few things in scripture. It can refer to **Jesus' second coming (Zech 14:1-4)** and also to **the entire tribulation time (Zeph 1:14-18)**. The Thessalonians were under so much persecution they thought they were in the tribulation and were experiencing God's judgment. Apparently there were even false letters claiming to be from Paul that were trying to unsettle believers. Paul is going to encourage them that **the coming of Jesus to gather up His church will come first, before the day of the Lord**. He also points out some key events that will take place before the day of the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-5 ESV

- (3) Let no one deceive you in any way. **For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,**
- (4) who opposes and **exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship**, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, **proclaiming himself to be God**.
- (5) Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

The day of the Lord cannot come until the rebellion, or apostasy comes first.

The false teaching will continue to increase until there is a mass departure from truth.

Right alongside this departure the Antichrist, who is called **the man of lawlessness, or the son of destruction** will be revealed. He will be against the true God and also any other man made god or religion. He will start something entirely new and will proclaim himself to be God. Paul is bringing up the antichrist to encourage believers that we will not be here for this. The Thessalonians can be assured they are not in the day of the lord because the antichrist is not currently exalting himself, he is being restrained.

2 Thessalonians 2:6-10 ESV

- (6) And **you know what is restraining him** now so that he may be revealed in his time.
- (7) For **the mystery of lawlessness is already at work**. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.
- (8) And **then the lawless one will be revealed**, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of His coming.
- (9) The coming of the lawless one **is by the activity of Satan** with all power and false signs and wonders,
- (10) and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

Satan is always at work in the world and wants to keep it in the darkness. He does not know the specific time, of the day of the Lord **so Satan is always trying to keep the world in darkness and keep things ready for the Antichrist to rise up**. The mystery of lawlessness is already

here, and can be seen as John put it, in the many antichrists who deny Jesus. The Antichrist will not be free to be revealed until the restrainer is removed. There are many opinions as to who the restrainer is, but I believe it is the Holy Spirit within the church. The Holy Spirit is actively at work in convicting the world (John 16:8), and providing God's light of truth.

Matthew 5:13-16 ESV

(13) "You are the **salt of the earth**, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

(14) "You are **the light of the world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

(15) Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

(16) In the same way, **let your light shine before others**, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Believers are called the salt and light of the World. We are told in John 1:9 that Jesus is the true light, so we have these qualities because of Him, as we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Salt **preserves**. It keeps something from decaying. It can also be used as a **fertilizer**, to help soil have the proper nutrients and help plants grow. The Holy Spirit in us is restraining the darkness and **it is restraining the decay of this world. At the same time He is fertilizing hearts** and wants more people to come to know Jesus. He is the light shining through us into a dark world. Once believers are **gathered together to Jesus**, the Holy Spirit will not be restraining like He has been and the Antichrist will be revealed.

John's main focus is not the future Antichrist but the many false teacher antichrists that had arisen. **As believers we should have a guard up against these many antichrists that are here now. Instead of the future Antichrist whom we will not be here to see.** John wants us to understand where these antichrist came from.

1 John 2:19 ESV

(19) They **went out from us**, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain **that they all are not of us.**

John has been referencing the plural "us" since the beginning of the book (1:1) "**we** have heard, which **we** have seen" and it refers to the other apostles and eyewitnesses in Jerusalem. These false teaching antichrists had been apart of the fellowship with the apostles in Jerusalem, but **now had left their location and their doctrine.** These antichrists left the doctrinal fellowship with the apostles and had gone out to share a false message. John is making sure everyone knows that they are not from us. These false teachers are no longer in unity with the apostles in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, these antichrist have not left the church as a whole yet, this is what makes them dangerous. We see a similar problem arise in Acts 15.

Acts 15:1-2; 5; 24-25 ESV

(1) But some men **came down from Judea** and were teaching the brothers, "**Unless you are circumcised** according to the custom of Moses, **you cannot be saved.**"

(2) And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed **to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles**

and the elders about this question.

(5) **But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees** rose up and said, **“It is necessary to circumcise them** and to order them to keep the law of Moses.”

(24) **Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words,** unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

(25) it has seemed good to us, **having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you** with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

False teachers came from Judea and were making claims that you had to follow the law to be saved. They claimed this is what the church in Jerusalem believed. Paul and Barnabas, are livid and “ had no small dissension” with them. To settle the issue they head back to Jerusalem to get a formal answer. **These false teachers were sharing a false gospel yet at some point they believed in the truth because scripture calls them believers.** Some false teachers were never saved, and others are and leave the truth (1 Tim 1:19-20). At times it is hard to tell because these passages are not primarily focused on the individual false teacher’s salvation but making sure the truth is protected. The Jerusalem church comes to a decision that salvation is based on grace (Acts 15:11). Then they had to send out a letter to clarify to the other churches what the decision was. Verse 24, warns against the false teachers who have **“gone out from us”** this is the exact same phrase John uses. There is no banner or secret handshake to show who is in fellowship. **True fellowship comes from the unity of the truth of God’s word.** False teachers leave the truth and show they are out of unity. As a body of believers and especially the elders we are called to guard against this kind of false teacher.

Acts 20:28-31 ESV

(28) **Pay careful attention** to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, **which He obtained with His own blood.**

(29) I know that after my departure **fierce wolves will come in among you,** not sparing the flock;

(30) and **from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things,** to draw away the disciples after them.

(31) **Therefore be alert,** remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Fierce wolves will come in from the outside and hurt the flock, and false teachers will arise from within and teach twisted things. Jesus bought the church with His own blood; we are precious to Him. **We are to pay careful attention first to our own walk and then to the body and to what is taught.** We are called to be **alert, watchful, a constant state of readiness.** We know it is the last hour, and there will be many antichrists. The great news is we know the truth and can keep coming back to it.

1 John 2:20 ESV

(20) But you have been anointed by the Holy One, **and you all have knowledge.**

God equipped us with the Holy Spirit so we could know the truth.

Revelation 22:7 NKJV

(7) "Behold, **I am coming quickly!** Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."
