

The Books of 1, 2, and 3 John, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 4: Warning Against Antichrists

1 John 2:18-27

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrine at stake in this passage is the person of Christ and the nature of false teaching, and the teacher should handle both with care because both are widely misunderstood. John uses "antichrist" not for a single end-times figure but for the many deceivers, present in his day and in ours, who deny that Jesus is the Christ and deny the Father and the Son. The teacher should gently correct the popular fixation on identifying one future antichrist and redirect students to John's actual concern: recognizing and resisting the recurring spirit that denies Christ's deity and incarnation. The phrase "last hour" should be explained as New Testament language for the whole final age inaugurated by Christ, not a prediction that the end was only days away.

A second doctrinal theme is the believer's safeguard: the truth heard from the beginning and the anointing of the Spirit. The teacher should present the anointing as the Spirit and the apostolic word working together to ground and keep believers, while taking care not to let verse 27 ("you have no need that anyone should teach you") be twisted into a rejection of teaching in the church, which John's own letter, and the New Testament's appointment of teachers, plainly contradicts. John's point is that they need no new teaching beyond the gospel they already received, not that instruction is unnecessary.

Pastorally and formationally, the lesson aims to produce settled, discerning believers who are neither paranoid nor naive. The defense against deception is not cleverness but faithfulness: abiding in the truth about Jesus. The teacher should also let verse 19 do its sobering work, warning against complacency, since real continuance in the faith is the evidence of genuine belonging, while pointing students to the security found in abiding rather than in presumption.

Question 1

Student Question:

John says, "it is the last hour," and that the presence of many antichrists is the proof of it (v. 18). What does John mean by "the last hour," and how does the New Testament use this kind of language about the age in which we now live?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Clarify the phrase first, because it is easily misread. John is not predicting that the world would end within months. The New Testament regularly speaks of the whole period from Christ's first coming to His return as the last days or the last hour (Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Peter

1:20). With the coming of Christ, the decisive turning point of history has already happened; we now live in the final age, awaiting only the consummation.

John's logic is that the appearance of many antichrists is a sign that confirms this is indeed the last hour. The rise of those who deny Christ is not a surprise to be feared but a mark of the age we expected. This steadies believers: deception is not evidence that God has lost control but a feature of the time between Christ's comings.

This is a good place to address premillennial speculation gently and clearly. John is not laying out a timeline for a future seven-year period or a single coming antichrist. He is describing the present reality of the church age. The kingdom of God has already come in Christ; Christ reigns now at the Father's right hand; and we await His return, not a future earthly political reign.

Apply it to the believer's posture. Because we live in the last hour, we live with both urgency and steadiness: urgency to hold fast and to call others to Christ, and steadiness because the outcome is already secured in the One who reigns.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- "The last hour" as the final age inaugurated by Christ's coming, not a prediction of an imminent calendar date
- New Testament usage of "last days" for the whole present age (Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2)
- The kingdom already established and Christ reigning now, against premillennial timelines
- The rise of false teaching as an expected mark of the present age, not a sign of God's loss of control

Discussion Prompts

- How does knowing we live in the last hour shape both our urgency and our steadiness?
- Why is it a mistake to read this passage as a prediction of a single future antichrist?
- How does Christ's present reign comfort us in an age of deception?

Question 2

Student Question:

John writes about people who once seemed to belong but then "went out from us" (v. 19). Have you become complacent about your own continuance in the faith? What in this passage warns you against assuming you could never drift away?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 19 is sobering and should be allowed its full weight. John speaks of people who had been part of the church, joined its worship, shared its life, and then departed, revealing by their leaving that they had never truly belonged in heart. Their going out exposed what was always so.

Use this to gently dismantle complacency. It is easy to assume that because we are here now, we will surely be here at the end. But the New Testament repeatedly warns believers to take heed lest they fall (1 Corinthians 10:12; Hebrews 3:12–14). Continuance in the faith is the evidence of genuine belonging; those who abide show they are truly Christ's.

Be careful to frame this rightly against the false security of once saved, always saved. John does not teach that a true believer can never fall away; the New Testament warns plainly that we can (Hebrews 6:4–6; Galatians 5:4). Nor does he teach an anxious insecurity in which we never know where we stand. He teaches that we remain by abiding, and that abiding is both our responsibility and the path of our security.

Apply it personally and hopefully. The warning is not meant to terrify but to wake us from presumption and drive us to abide. The one who keeps feeding on the truth, walking in obedience, and clinging to Christ has every reason for confidence, not because falling is impossible, but because they are actually holding fast.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Continuance in the faith as the evidence of genuine belonging
- The real possibility of falling away (against once saved, always saved)
- The warning against complacency and presumption (1 Corinthians 10:12)
- Security found in abiding, not in presumption, and assurance for those who hold fast

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you grown complacent, assuming you could never drift?
- How is continuance in the faith different from a guarantee of never falling?
- What does it look like to find security in abiding rather than in presumption?

Question 3

Student Question:

John defines the antichrist plainly: “he who denies that Jesus is the Christ,” who “denies the Father and the Son” (vv. 22–23). What does this teach us about who the antichrists really are, and why does John locate the heart of their error in the denial of who Jesus is?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

John strips the mystery away and gives a definition. The antichrist is the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, who denies the Father and the Son. The error is fundamentally about the identity of Jesus. Whatever else a false teaching gets wrong, this is the root: a refusal of who Jesus truly is.

Explain the specific denials John has in view. The deceivers of his day denied that Jesus was the divine Christ come in the flesh, separating the man Jesus from the divine Christ, or denying His

true humanity, or His full deity. To deny that Jesus is the Christ is to deny the very center of the gospel.

Help students see why this is the dividing line. Everything depends on who Jesus is. If He is not the divine Son come in the flesh, He cannot reveal the Father, cannot atone for sin, cannot save. The denial of His identity is not one error among many; it unravels the whole of salvation.

Bring it forward to our day. The same spirit operates wherever Jesus is reduced to a mere man, a great teacher, a moral example, or one savior among many. The label antichrist sounds dramatic, but John applies it to any teaching that denies that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The antichrist defined as one who denies that Jesus is the Christ (the deity and messiahship of Jesus)
- Denial of the incarnation and deity of Christ as the root of false teaching
- The identity of Jesus as the dividing line of true and false faith
- Modern forms of the same denial: Jesus reduced to teacher, example, or one savior among many

Discussion Prompts

- Why does John locate the heart of all false teaching in the denial of who Jesus is?
- What modern teachings deny that Jesus is the Christ, come in the flesh?
- How does a wrong view of Jesus unravel the rest of the gospel?

Question 4

Student Question:

Many today are happy to admire Jesus as a teacher while denying that He is the divine Son and the only way to the Father. Where do you encounter that pressure, and have you ever softened your confession of Jesus to avoid conflict or to fit in?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question brings the doctrine of Christ's identity into the student's daily courage. Our culture is often happy with a domesticated Jesus, a wise teacher, a symbol of love, as long as His exclusive claims are quietly set aside. The pressure to trim our confession is real and constant.

Help students name where they feel it: among coworkers, in school, on social media, even among family. The temptation is rarely to deny Jesus outright but to mute the offensive parts, to imply He is one good path among many, to keep silent when His lordship would cost us something.

Invite honest confession. Most of us can recall a moment when we softened, hedged, or stayed silent to avoid awkwardness or rejection. Naming it without shame is the path to greater courage next time. John's readers were called to confess the Son plainly, and so are we.

Encourage them with the stakes and the grace. To confess Christ is to have the Father; the confession is not a burden but a privilege. And the same anointing that taught the early church steadies us to speak. The aim is not combative argument but clear, loving, unembarrassed witness to who Jesus really is.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The exclusivity of Christ as the only way to the Father (John 14:6)
- The pressure to domesticate Jesus and mute His exclusive claims
- Confessing Christ before others as part of genuine faith (Matthew 10:32–33)
- Clear, loving witness rather than combative argument

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you feel the most pressure to soften your confession of Jesus?
- When have you hedged or stayed silent, and what drove it?
- What would clear, loving, unembarrassed witness look like in that setting?

Question 5

Student Question:

John says, “No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also” (v. 23). What does this teach about the relationship between the Father and the Son, and why is it impossible to truly have God while rejecting Jesus?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This verse closes the door on a popular modern idea: that one can have God, or be right with God, while bypassing Jesus. John says it is impossible. The Father and the Son are so bound together that to reject the Son is to lose the Father, and to confess the Son is to have the Father also.

Explain the theological ground. The Son is the Father's self-revelation; no one knows the Father except through the Son (Matthew 11:27; John 14:9). To deny the Son is therefore to cut oneself off from the only One who makes the Father known and the only Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5).

Apply it to the common claim that all religions worship the same God by different names. John will not allow it. A god approached while rejecting Jesus Christ is not the true God but an idol of the imagination. The true and living God has revealed Himself in His Son, and He is had only through the Son.

Hold the positive promise high. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. This is wonderfully reassuring: the humblest believer who confesses Jesus as Lord and Christ genuinely has the Father, lacks nothing, and is fully in the family of God. The way to God is open, but it runs through His Son.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The inseparable relationship of the Father and the Son
- The Son as the sole revealer of and access to the Father (John 14:6, 9; 1 Timothy 2:5)
- The impossibility of having the true God while rejecting Jesus
- The full assurance of those who confess the Son: they have the Father also

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it impossible to have the Father while rejecting the Son?
- How does this passage answer the idea that all religions reach the same God?
- What comfort is there in knowing that confessing the Son means having the Father?

Question 6

Student Question:

John urges, "let what you heard from the beginning abide in you" (v. 24). What does it look like, in practical terms, to let the truth you first received take deep root and stay, especially in a culture that prizes the new and dismisses the old?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

John's remedy for deception is not novelty but rootedness: let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. The gospel they first received, the apostolic truth about Jesus, is the standard. They do not need a newer, more advanced teaching; they need to remain in what is true.

This challenges a deep instinct of our culture, which assumes the newest idea is the best and treats the old as outdated. In matters of the gospel, the opposite is true. The truth does not improve with each passing fashion; it was delivered once for all, and our task is to abide in it.

Make abiding practical. It looks like steady intake of Scripture, regular gathering with the saints under sound teaching, memory and meditation that let the truth sink deep, and a settled refusal to be swept along by every new spiritual fad. Truth that merely passes through the mind does not anchor; truth that abides does.

Point to the promise attached: if what we heard from the beginning abides in us, we will abide in the Son and in the Father. Rootedness in the truth is not dry traditionalism; it is the very means of remaining in living fellowship with God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gospel delivered once for all as the unchanging standard (Jude 3)
- Abiding in the truth as the defense against deception
- The error of prizing novelty over the apostolic message
- The link between abiding in the truth and abiding in the Father and the Son

Discussion Prompts

- What practices help the truth take deep root rather than merely passing through?
- Where does our culture pressure you to trade the old gospel for newer ideas?
- How is rootedness in the truth different from dry traditionalism?

Question 7

Student Question:

John says believers “have been anointed by the Holy One” and that this anointing “teaches you about everything” (vv. 20, 27). What is this anointing, and how do the Spirit and the apostolic word work to guard us from being deceived, without this meaning we no longer need teachers in the church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Explain the anointing carefully, because this passage is sometimes misused. The anointing John speaks of is the gift of the Holy Spirit given to believers, working together with the apostolic word of truth they received. Through the Spirit and the word, believers are taught and kept, able to discern truth from error.

Address the misreading of verse 27 head on. When John says “you have no need that anyone should teach you,” he is not abolishing teaching in the church; that would contradict his own letter, which is itself teaching, and the New Testament’s clear appointment of teachers (Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:2). His point is that they need no new teaching beyond the gospel they already have, no secret knowledge from the deceivers who claim to offer something more. They are already equipped with the truth.

Guard against two errors. One is the claim of present-day new revelation, as though the Spirit gives believers fresh truth beyond Scripture. John points them back to what they heard from the beginning, not forward to new messages. The complete New Testament is now our authority (2 Timothy 3:16–17). The other error is a proud individualism that despises teachers and accountability. The Spirit who anoints us also gave the church teachers and elders.

Apply it with balance. We are guarded from deception as the Spirit works through the word we have received and through the faithful teaching of the church. Discernment is not a private

intuition that bypasses Scripture and community; it is the truth abiding in us, confirmed and reinforced among God's people.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The anointing as the gift of the Holy Spirit working with the apostolic word
- Verse 27 as a denial of need for new teaching, not a denial of teachers in the church
- The completed New Testament as our authority, against claims of present-day new revelation
- The God-appointed role of teachers and elders in the church (Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:2)
- Discernment as truth abiding in us, confirmed in community, not private intuition apart from Scripture

Discussion Prompts

- How do the Spirit and the word work together to guard us from deception?
- Why does verse 27 not mean we can dispense with teachers in the church?
- How do we avoid both claims of new revelation and a proud rejection of accountability?

Question 8

Student Question:

John assumes his readers can recognize the truth and reject the lie. How carefully are you actually feeding on God's word, so that you would recognize a counterfeit gospel if it were dressed up attractively in front of you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question presses the matter of discernment into the student's habits. John assumes his readers know the truth and can spot the lie. That ability is not automatic; it grows from steady familiarity with the genuine article. Those who handle real currency constantly can feel a counterfeit at once.

Help students assess their actual intake of the word, honestly and without shame. Many believers spend hours absorbing the culture's messages and only minutes, if that, in Scripture. A thin diet of truth leaves us defenseless when error comes dressed attractively, quoting verses, sounding spiritual, appealing to our desires.

Note that the most dangerous error is not the obvious lie but the attractive half-truth, the counterfeit that resembles the gospel closely enough to deceive. Only deep familiarity with the truth equips us to feel the difference. This is a strong argument for regular, careful, lifelong feeding on God's word.

Encourage a concrete commitment. Not a guilt-driven resolution, but a realistic plan to spend regular time in Scripture, under sound teaching, with God's people. The goal is a heart and mind so saturated with the truth about Jesus that a counterfeit, however polished, sets off the alarm.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Discernment as the fruit of deep familiarity with the truth
- The danger of attractive half-truths and counterfeit gospels
- The thinness of a believer poorly fed on Scripture
- Regular intake of the word, under sound teaching, as the path to discernment

Discussion Prompts

- Honestly, how does your intake of God's word compare to your intake of the culture's messages?
- Why is an attractive half-truth more dangerous than an obvious lie?
- What realistic plan would deepen your familiarity with the truth?

Question 9

Student Question:

John warns of deceivers who deny the incarnation and deity of Christ, and grounds the church's safety in confessing the Son and abiding in the truth (vv. 22–27). Why is the confession that Jesus is the Christ, come in the flesh, the dividing line of true faith, and what is finally at stake if it is surrendered?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and the teacher should give it the fullest treatment. Gather the threads of the passage: the antichrists deny that Jesus is the Christ; whoever denies the Son loses the Father; the safeguard is confessing the Son and abiding in the truth. At the center stands the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh.

Explain why this confession is the dividing line and not merely one doctrine among many. Christianity is not first a moral philosophy or a set of values; it is the announcement that the eternal Son of God became flesh, died for our sins, and rose again. Strip away the deity and incarnation of Christ, and what remains may keep the vocabulary of faith but has lost its substance. There is no gospel left to preach.

Trace what is lost if the confession is surrendered. Lose the deity of Christ, and His death becomes the death of a mere man, unable to atone for the world. Lose the incarnation, and there is no real death and resurrection in our flesh, no true Mediator between God and men.

Lose either, and we lose the Father too, for the Son is the only way to Him. The whole structure of salvation rests on who Jesus is.

Connect this to the church's task of contending for the faith. John is not modeling paranoia but faithfulness. The church guards this confession not out of a love for controversy but because souls depend on it. To surrender it for the sake of peace or relevance is to give away the one thing the church exists to proclaim.

Land it on the heart. This is not merely a line to defend but a Lord to treasure. The confession that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh is the doorway into fellowship with the Father, the ground of our forgiveness, and the anchor of our hope. To hold it fast is not stubbornness; it is faithfulness to the One who is worth everything.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh, as the dividing line of true faith
- The deity and incarnation of Christ as essential to the gospel, not optional doctrines
- What is lost if the confession is surrendered: the atonement, the mediation of Christ, and the Father Himself
- The church's duty to contend for the faith once delivered (Jude 3)
- The confession as a Lord to treasure, not merely a position to defend

Discussion Prompts

- Why is the confession of who Jesus is the dividing line of true faith?
- What specifically is lost if the deity or incarnation of Christ is surrendered?
- How can the church contend for this truth without a spirit of mere controversy?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this passage, from the warning about antichrists, to the call to abide in what you heard from the beginning. Name one specific way Jesus is calling you, through this passage, to hold fast to the truth about Him and to help guard others from being deceived.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone draws the passage to a personal point. Trace the movement: deception is real and present; its root is the denial of who Jesus is; our safeguard is confessing the Son and abiding in the truth we received. The call throughout is to hold fast.

Press for one specific step. For some it will be a renewed commitment to feed on God's word so as to grow in discernment. For others it will be the courage to confess Christ clearly where they

have been muting Him. For others it will be guarding their own complacency, or helping a wavering friend hold on.

Draw out the second half of the question: helping guard others. John wrote to protect his flock. Discerning believers do not hoard the truth; they strengthen the wavering, teach the young, and lovingly warn those drifting toward error. Invite students to consider whom they might help hold fast.

Close in the security John offers. Our safety is not in our own cleverness but in abiding in the Son and in the Father, kept by the truth we have known from the beginning. Encourage the class that the One who is the Truth will keep all who keep holding on to Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal application of discernment, confession, and abiding
- The believer's responsibility to help guard others from deception
- Security found in abiding in the Son and the Father
- Holding fast as both an individual and a communal calling

Discussion Prompts

- What single step will you take to hold fast to the truth about Jesus?
- Who in your life is wavering, and how might you help them abide?
- How does abiding in the Son free us from both paranoia and presumption?