

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 2:7:2006

Reading: 1John 2:18-27

BACK TO BASICS

7. THE DANGERS OF THE LAST DAYS

A seventeen year old high school student, in order to graduate had to write an essay on a religious subject. He chose the subject of the union of believers with Christ, according to the Gospel of John. Let me share with you just a portion of that essay. “ ***Our heart, reason, history, and the work of Christ convince us that without Him, we are doomed by God and only Christ can save us.***” These thoughts from a seventeen year old one reveal one with wisdom beyond his age. They are words from one that had been baptised at the age of six into the Lutheran Church, and confirmed at the age of sixteen. The name of this young man was Karl Marx. Just nine years after writing these words he abandoned any Christian commitment he may have made at one time. He would go to become one of the most influential atheists of history. His ideas would spawn through the Soviet Union and the Communist movement, one of the worst periods of human misery and death in history. Here John tells us that one of the marks of the age in which we live is that there will be those who will abandon their faith and the faith.

John is talking to his children. (2:18) This is a family talk. He is giving a fireside chat to his children. Now he has warned them about the conflict between *light and darkness*, he has warned them about the conflict between *love and hatred*, now he is warning them about the conflict between *truth and error*. You see, its not enough for a Christian to walk in the light of God, or in the love of God, a Christian must also walk in the truth of God. “ *But sure it makes no difference what you believe as long as you are sincere ?*” Have you heard those words even from professing Christians ? Is “ ***sincerity***,” the magic ingredient that makes something true ? A nurse in the hospital gives some medicine to a patient and the patient becomes violently ill. Sure, the nurse is sincere, but the medicine is wrong and the patient almost dies ! You see, it does make a difference what a person believes and John is very concerned as to what we believe in the last days ! Did you notice what he says ? “ *Little children it is the last time, or the last hour.*” John is trying to teach his children what time it is.

One of the things you have to teach little children is how to tell time. I heard about two little boys who were playing one afternoon and one little lad said to the other, “ *do you know what time it is ?*” He said, “ *No, but I know it is not four o’clock.*” He said, “ *how do you know that ?* He said, “ *because my Mummy told me to be at home at four and I am not home yet.*” Now what does John mean here when he talks about “ *the last time ?*” (2:18) Are we in the last days or was John in the last days ? The answer is yes ! For this phrase refers to the time period between the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. The last time began in the days of John and has been growing in intensity until now. Do you recall Paul words ? “ *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*” (2 Tim 3:1) Again in Timothy we are told, “ *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some depart from the faith.*” (1 Tim 4:1) Personally I believe

that we are living in the last of the last days. Its almost midnight on God's clock, but in these last days and in these last hours there are certain dangers the church faces. What are these dangers ? Well, did you notice in (2:19) the sharp contrast between “ *they,* ” and “ *us.* ” John is contrasting the true with the false and he says three crucial things about those who go away.

(1) THEY DENY THE CHRIST

Look if you will at (2:22-23) You see, the great question for a Christian is, ***Who is Jesus Christ*** ? Is Christ merely an Example, a good man, a wonderful teacher, or is He God come in the flesh ? The great assertion that sets a Christian apart from others is this, Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh. (4:2) Now not all preachers and teachers who claim to be Christian are really Christian in their belief. If they confess that Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh, then they belong to the true faith. But if they deny Christ, then they belong to Antichrist. The term “ *antichrist,* ” is a term that is only used by John in all of the Bible. The prefix “ *anti,* ” has a dual meaning. It can mean both “ *against Christ,* ” and “ *instead of,* ” Christ ! Satan in his frenzy is fighting Christ and His eternal truth and he is substituting his counterfeits for the realities found only in Christ. Now will you notice here that John talks about,

(a) The ONE Antichrist that Will Come:

He says, “ *Antichrist shall come,* ” (2:18) Do you remember the words that Christ spoke and John recorded ? “ *I am come in my Father's name and ye receive me not, if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.* ” (5:43) The Lord Jesus predicted that there would come a final personality of evil. He would come in his own name, and though people would reject God's Christ, they would accept and receive the devil's antichrist. Paul also had to say something about this anti-christ, this satanic superman who will make his appearance just before the return of the Lord. In his second letter to the Thessalonians he says, “ *Let no man deceive you by any means for that day shall not come, except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.* ” (2:3) He is called the man of sin, the son of perdition. John refers to him in Revelation as the beast. You know, when the Lord Jesus came into this world, the devil offered Him all the kingdom of this world, if He would fall down and worship him. Christ said, “ *get thee hence, Satan.* ” (Matt 4:10) He refused the offer of the devil, but in the future the devil will make this same offer to a man, and that man will take the devil up on the offer, and the devil will give to him the kingdoms of this world. He will be the final world ruler who will represent Satan on planet earth. (a) Then John talks about,

(b) The OTHER Antichrists that Have Come:

For he says “ *even now there are many antichrists.* ” (2:18) These were the false teachers who were troubling John's congregations because their false doctrine distorted the truth and opposed Christ. Do you recall that the Lord Jesus spoke of these ? He said, “ *for there shall arise false Christ's and false prophets.* ” (Matt 24:24) Do you remember the charge Paul gave to the elders at Ephesus ? He said “ *Take heed, therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock for I know*

this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts 20:28-30) My the false teachers were prevalent in John’s day and are present in our day. ***They Deny the Christ !*** Now these cults may say, “ *We want God but don’t gave us the Christ of the Bible.*” Well, you can’t have Him. For John says, in (2:24) If you deny the Son, you deny the Father. The Unitarian says, “ *we want God but we don’t want the Christ of the Bible,*” well you cannot have Him. The Jehovah Witness says, “ *we want God but not the Christ of the Bible,*” well you can’t have Him. The Jew says, “ *I accept God, but I don’t believe in Jesus,*” well you can’t have God. The cults and liberal Protestants are saying, “ *We’ll worship God and bow down with the pagans in the temple, but don’t gave us the Christ of the Bible.*” But Christ says, “ *I am the way no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.*” (Jn 14:6) My will you watch out for the false prophets ? Those who have Christ in their creed, but not the Christ of the Bible. They may present a Christ that offers you health and wealth, he may be a Christ that is offered continually in the mass, but He is not the Christ of the Bible. Here is the first thing that is said about those who go away. (1)

(2) THEY DESERT THE CHURCH

For John says, “ *they went out from us, but they were not of us,*” (2:19) Now the people here in view were not simply backsliders, but apostates. There’s a difference. An apostate is one who has completely abandoned the Christian faith, one who is standing apart from the Christian faith. Dig deep into the heart of a backslider and you’ll find Christ. (Ruth 1:3, 7) Dig beneath the surface of an apostate, into the dark depths of his or her heart and you’ll find the Devil, who delights in these founders and followers of Christ-dishonouring cults. Now says John these people desert the church. Now when we think of the church, think of,

(a) The PICTURE that is REVEALED:

For the N.T. presents the church in a two fold way, as one worldwide family, and as local units or assemblies of believers. There is a universal as well as a local aspect of the church. When a sinner trusts Christ as Saviour he receives eternal life, and immediately becomes a member of God’s family and a part of Christ’s spiritual body. He should then identify himself with a local group of believers, a church and start serving Christ. (Acts 2:41-42) You see, one of the evidences of true Christian life is a desire to be with the people of God. John says, “ *We know that we have passed brethren.*” (3:14) When people share the same divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) and are indwelt by the same Holy Spirit (Rom 8:14) they want to enjoy fellowship and share with one another the things of the Lord. They want to be together. But these “ *counterfeit Christians,*” mentioned here did not remain in the fellowship. They went out. John speaks here of,

(b) The PEOPLE that are REMOVED:

“ *They went out from us.*” Now John is not thinking here of people who flit from church to church wherever fancy takes them. No ! *This is not a case of getting out of church, this is a case of getting away from church.* This is not the case of a backslider, this is the case of an apostate.

This is someone turning their back completely on Christ and His church. Now notice what John says,

“ *they went out from us, but they were not of us.*” They were members of a church but not members of the church, they were in the same building, but they are not part of the same body. My they sang the hymns, they listened to the Word, they partook of the bread and wine, they went through the waters of baptism, their voices were heard in the prayer meeting, to all intents and purposes they looked the part, but in their hearts, they were miles away and now says John they go out to embrace another Christ ! My does this surprise you ? It shouldn't ! For Christ said, “ *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matt 7:21) That goes for Baptists too. You can be a fully fledged Baptist, certified, purified and satisfied and still be lost. Being in the church does not necessarily make you a part of the church. Out West they tell the story of a train that was stopped by an outlaw.

He had a mask over his face with two guns drawn, going through every car, taking all the jewellery, the dollars bills, anything of value. Finally he got to a man that was just trembling all over. He said to that bandit, “ *Please Sir, don't take my dollar bills, I'm just a poor Baptist preacher.*” When the outlaw heard that he said, “ *Are you a Baptist ? So am I. Let's shake hands.*” Now that outlaw could have been in the church but he was not of the church. So John is saying there may be people among us but they are not of us. Now we do not always know who these people are but Christ does. If you had looked at the twelve disciples you would never have known that one would have deceived the Saviour, and even if you had have known it, you could not have picked him out. But Christ “ *knew from the beginning who should betray Him.*” (Jn 6:64) Did Judas ever lose his salvation ? No ! Judas never had his salvation. My What about you ? Are you genuinely saved ? Are you the real thing ? You say, “ *how can you tell ?*” Well, John talks here about,

(c) The PROOF that is REQUIRED:

Look at (2:19) Now John is not saying that staying in the church will save you, but he is saying that being saved will keep you in the church. He is saying that the real test of your profession is perseverance. Now there are some professing believers who are “ ***Alka Seltzer Christians.***” You drop them in the water. They fizz and then they fizzle out and disappear. The only difference is they gave headaches instead of relieving them. Someone has said, “ *the faith that fizzles at the finish was flawed from the first.*” The problem with many people is, not that they are backslidden but that they are lost. They have never truly been saved for if they had been saved they would still be a part of the church of Jesus Christ. My if perseverance is a proof of true profession, are you persevering ? John says of these “ *Counterfeit Christians,*” they (1) (2)

(3) THEY DECEIVE THE CHRISTIAN

The word “ *seduce,*” in (2:26) carries the idea of “ *being led astray.*” We have been warned that this would happen. (1 Tim 4:1) For the,

(a) The Purpose of the Devil is to Ensnare:

The Saviour calls Satan the “*father of lies*,” (Jn 8:44) Do you know something ? The devil’s purpose is to lead Christians astray by teaching them false doctrines. (2 Cor 11:1-4 13-15) Was this not one of the reasons why John wrote this letter ? (2:26) To protect the saints from those who would lead them astray ? My did you know that Satan has counterfeit “*ministers*,” (2 Cor 11:13-15) who preach a counterfeit “*gospel*,”(Gal 1:6) that produces counterfeit “*Christians*,”(Jn 8:43) who depend on a counterfeit “*righteousness*,”(Rom 10:1) This is why we are to be strong in the Lord and grounded in Bible doctrine. I hear people say all the time, “*I’m not interested in this doctrine stuff*.” You had better be interested in doctrine, for you need to know what the Bible says lest the devil ensnare you through false teaching. It’s a fascinating thing to discover that many of the founders of the major cults today came right out of a church. Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormons was reared in a Presbyterian home. William Millar the founder of the Seventh Day Adventists was a licensed Baptist preacher, and Ellen White, their prophetess was reared in a Methodist home. Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses was a Presbyterian, and Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Scientists was a Congregationalist and was reared in a strict Christian home. My the devil is out to get you ! What can we do ? How can we counteract the spirit of antichrist that is so prevalent ? (a)

(b) The Provision of the Lord is to Enable:

And in these verses John outlines God’s three fold provision.

1. Stay in the CHURCH of GOD:

“*They went out from us if they had been of us, they would have no doubt continued with us*,” (2:19) Stay in the church for Paul says, the church is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*.” (1 Tim 3:15) That makes the local church very important. You say, “*I’m not so hot on the local church, I believe in the church universal ?*” I do also, but I also believe in the local church. Do you know something ? The church universal never holds a meeting, never takes up a collection, never sends out pastors and missionaries, but the local church does and God says of this local church, “*Not forsaking the assembling*,” (Heb 10:25) My in these last of the last days you ought to be here Sunday morning, Sunday night, and through the week. Some of you are saying, “*But I’m just busy to come all those times*. Well, J.C. Penny said “*If a man is to busy to worship the Lord twice on Sunday and on prayer meeting night, he has more business than God intended him to have*.” 1.

2. Stay in the WORD of GOD:

John says in (2:24) The best remedy against error is truth and truth is found in the Word of God. Do you know what Christ said in His great high priestly prayer ? “*Thy Word is truth*.” (Jn 17:17) That is, the Word is more than just true, though it is true, it is also truth. The Word of God is the sum total of truth, it is the plumb line of what is right. It is God’s plumb line to keep you on the straight and narrow ! Get in it, study it, stay in it for if you don’t you are sitting duck for false teachers ! So many of us I’m afraid are like the man George Whitefield was talking to one time

and he said, “ *Sir, what do you believe ?* ” He said, “ *I believe what my church believes.* ” “ *And what does your church believe ?* ” “ *The same thing I believe.* ” Whitefield said, “ *Well, what do you both believe ?* ” He said, “ *We both believe the same thing.* ” My get into the book, know what you believe and why you believe it ! 1, 2,

3. Stay in the SPIRIT of GOD:

The word “ *unction*,” in (2:20) and “ *anointing*,” in (2:27) are the same word and speak of the ministry of the Holy Spirit ! The word “ *anoint*,” reminds us of the O.T. practice of pouring oil on the head of a person being set apart for special service. A priest was anointed (Exod 28:41) and so was a king (1 Sam 15:1) or a prophet (1 Kings 19:16) Now John tells us that every believer has experienced the “ *anointing of the Spirit*,”(2:20, 27, 2 Cor 1:21) and this “ *anointing of the Spirit*,” is for two reasons.

1.It is given for our INSTRUCTION:

Look at (2:27) I don’t think that John is denying the office of teacher (Eph 4:11) but is saying that neither those teachers nor those believers are dependent on the wisdom or opinions of men for the truth. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth. (Jn 16:13) You see, when I am teaching you, if I have done my homework, and if I am right with God its not really me who is doing the teaching, it’s the Holy Spirit who is teaching you through me. I’m just God’s delivery boy telling you what the Spirit of God has laid on my heart. 1.

2. It is given for our PROTECTION:

As John tells us in (2:20-21) You see, *the Holy Spirit is God’s alarm clock that is set to go off every time someone tries to teach you something that isn’t true.* A missionary to the American Indians was walking down the streets of Los Angeles with an Indian friend who was a new Christian. As they walked down the street, they passed a man on the corner who was preaching. The man was not an orthodox Christian, he was part of a cult, but all that the Indian saw was that this man was preaching and so he wanted to hear what this man had to say. The missionary decided to let the Indian hear this man for himself, and he prayed that God would protect him from error. After a few minutes the Indian turned away and joined his missionary friend, and as they began walking up the street again, the missionary said, “ *Well, what did you think of the preacher ?* ” And the Indian said, “ *All the time he was preaching something in my heart kept saying Liar, Liar, Liar.* ” The missionary smiled and said, “ *Friend, that something was someone the Holy Spirit of God.* ”

The Dangers of the Last Days ! (1) (2) (3) My I believe we are living in the last of the last days, and these days are fraught with terrific dangers, but if a man is drilled in the Word of God, filled with the Spirit of God, and thrilled with the Son of God, the victory will be his.