

Route 66

1 John: Liars and Antichrists

Part 62 – August 28, 2011

Ancient accounts and good evidence reveal that, in his late 80s, John wrote his Gospel, three epistles (i.e. letters), and the book of Revelation.



Probably the youngest disciple, he lived well into his 90s, and passed away in about 100^{AD}. Ephesus was his base of ministry, and from there he served the seven churches he names in Revelation: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. It was 50 years since Jesus had lived and died ... and lived. And Peter and Paul had both been gone for about 30 years.



If you could've walked down Curetes [crates] Street, in Ephesus, just before the turn of the first century AD, you might've met the sole surviving disciple of Christ. Of the twelve, ten had been executed, including his brother, James; and one committed suicide. Ephesus had some of the world's first modern lamp-lighted streets. And, up ahead on the right is a first century public bath.¹



If John took you here, you would've had your choice of the caldarium (hot bath), tepidarium (warm bath), or the frigidarium (cold bath).



And (if you're a guy), you could've sat in the steam bath and listened to the man who watched Jesus heal the sick, raise the dead, walk on water, and die on the cross (he was the only disciple there). He would've told you how he outran Peter to be the first to see the empty tomb; and just how Jesus ascended into heaven.

And, he would've explained how the Christian community was being torn apart by two poisonous perversions of the Gospel.

Some denied Jesus as God's Son because everything material is evil; so God couldn't have come in a physical body. They argued that his body, blood, death, and resurrection were an illusion.

¹ The "Scholastica Bath" in Ephesus was built in the first century AD, and rebuilt in the 4th century.

Others denied that Jesus was the Son of God because he died, and God can't die. These "believers" rejected Jesus' pre-existence, his virgin birth, his atoning death, and his resurrection. A persuasive teacher named Cerinthus taught that the Christ-spirit came to Jesus at his baptism and left him alone at the cross. But whatever the heresy, it's always about the same *one* thing: diminishing Jesus as God's Son always *conveniently* ends up justifying sin and rationalizing disobedience.

John had a disciple named Polycarp, who tells a great story about John in a public bath in Ephesus when Cerinthus came in.² Polycarp says that John jumped up, rushed out without bathing, and yelled back, "Let us flee, lest the building fall down; for Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is inside!" It appears John wrote this epistle/letter largely to refute the heresy of Cerinthus and his ilk, and to counteract the confusion and the damage it was inflicting on his congregations.

See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us – even eternal life. I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. – 1 John 2:24-26 NIV

He coins the term "antichrist" (which *only* appears in 1st and 2nd John, and *not* Revelation) for these enemies of Christ.

... and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. – 1 John 2:18b NIV

And he defines exactly what he means.

And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an **antichrist**. – 1 John 2:22 NLT

The Gospel stands or falls on God's love being manifested by his coming into our world, as flesh and blood, to sacrifice himself as a perfect man, on behalf of man, in order to redeem man. And, at this late stage in life, John doesn't have time for pleasantries with those who would diminish Jesus in order to rationalize their disobedience. He assures his people ...

The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. – 1 John 2:4 NIV

Old John just comes out and says: if you claim to be a Christian but you're not growing in obedience to his Word ... you're a liar. Did someone just turn up the heat in this steam bath?! Most people want to serve God ... as advisors! If someone's lifestyle and the way they treat others *contradicts* their Christian 'claims' ... you should believe their lifestyle!

If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. – 1 John 1:6-7 NIV

² The story is quoted in a five volume work titled, "Against Heresies", by Irenaeus (a disciple of Polycarp), circa 180 AD

A person can claim anything they want about their faith, but, things in the light can't help but reflect the light. When John says, "the light", he's referring to grace, truth, and love. And, "walking" speaks of the believers' journey. But, to "[walk in grace, truth, and love, as Jesus did]", requires us to pay more attention to *our own* failure-to-love, than to the pain we feel when others fail to love us the way they 'should'. Jesus didn't lay down his life to *make* God love us, but *because* God loves us! The secret isn't in learning to love others as much as we love ourselves; it's in learning to love them more.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. - 1 John 3:16 NIV

What's the first instinct when someone gives you an incredible gift? To get them something in return! And we reciprocate God's love by loving those who are the most unlovable in our lives.

The great tragedy is not that someday you will die. The great tragedy is that you may die before you learn to really love. - Dr. Larry Crabb, "66 Love Letters"

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. - 1 John 4:8 NIV

If you don't know God the Son, you can't know the joy that only comes from washing the feet of those who should be washing yours.

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. - 1 John 4:20 NIV

Old John says: if we say we love God, but we're holding hate in our heart toward *someone* ... again, we're lying to ourselves. Refusing to love someone God created in his own image is like saying to a female identical twin, "Wow, your sister's ugly!"

As John winds down this letter, he says something very fascinating.

Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. This is the one who came by water and blood - Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. - 1 John 5:5-8 NIV

Cerinthus taught that Jesus wasn't the Son of God, but that the Christ-spirit came to him at the water of baptism and left him alone at the blood of the cross. So, John says that the "Son of God", "Jesus Christ", "did not come by water only" (as Cerinthus taught), but by water and blood! And Spirit indeed descended on Him at his baptism, but that same Spirit testified through the prophets concerning the cross. And "the Spirit, the water, and the blood" "are in agreement"! In all four Gospels, there's only one mention, one reference to blood coming out of Jesus during the events of the crucifixion.

... one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of **blood** and **water**. The man who saw it has given testimony ... - *John 19:34-35a NIV*

John saw this as confirmation of Jesus' deity *after* death. A Christ-spirit leave; but rather, God the Son died on that cross!

We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. - *1 John 5:9-10 NIV*



What exactly is God's testimony about his Son?

At the waters of the Jordan River, when Jesus' mission of redemption was initiated:

... a voice from heaven said, "**This is my Son** ..." - Matthew 3:17a NIV



At the blood of Calvary, when Jesus' mission of redemption was terminated:

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was **the Son of God!**" - Matthew 27:54 NIV



And through the power of the Holy Spirit when God raised Jesus from the death to life:

... through the Spirit of holiness [he] was declared with power to be the **Son of God** by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. - Romans 1:4 NIV

He is 'Jesus' in all his humanity. He is 'Christ' in all his divinity. And he is 'our Lord' when we submit to his Spirit. The antichrists gladly accept Jesus the good teacher, the moral example, and even the miracle worker. But they have to eliminate Jesus the Son of God, and the significance of that cross! They started in before he even died.

John was there; he saw 'em mocking Jesus on the cross and saying, "Come down from the cross, and we will believe." (*Mat. 27:42; Mark 15:32*) Well, Jesus wasn't coming down then, and even though he was 90 years old, John wasn't about to let 'em pull him down now! John knew firsthand that the Word was made flesh ...

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. - *1 John 5:11-12 NIV*