

# Explore: Dangers to Avoid

June 5, 2015

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for June 21 focuses on 1 John 2:15-27.*

The truth of the gospel always will stand the test of time. Jesus' commission to tell this truth and make disciples of all nations requires no less than our total commitment. The litmus test of our lives, therefore, is to walk as Jesus walked. Consequently, we have noticed so far in 1 John both why and how we can live on mission every day under his lordship. For instance, John called us to connect faith with practice. The natural outcome of such a life becomes a demonstrative fellowship with God and with each other. Accordingly, John also advocated for holy living. Just as an apple tree bears fruit, so does the Christian bear the fruit of the Spirit.

John further explored the issue of holy living by providing some rather stern and powerful warnings regarding the influence of the world. The world is that which is opposed to God. For John, sin is an ever-present possibility for the believer. Sin crouches at the door. There are ways, however, one may avoid the pitfalls of sin and the tentacles of the world's effects. We will examine a few warnings and obtain guidance as we seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

## **Lovers of the world (2:15-17)**

The world offers alternatives to true fellowship with God and each other. It is important, however, to define what John meant when he used the term "world." In the Greek language, John used the term *kosmos*, from which we get our similar English word "cosmos." The *kosmos* refers not to the world or created order in terms of its physical characteristics. In other words, the world to which John referred is not the round planet that revolves around the sun. The *kosmos* also does not refer to outer space. The world is that

which is separated from its maker because of the corruption of sin. Humankind is at the center of the meaning of *kosmos*.

John consequently warns believers and others to stop loving the *kosmos*. John's use of the word "love" suggests people can give sacrificial and blind allegiance to the world. Specifically, believers are not to love the enticements of the world and its appetites. In fact, John specifically addressed a few of the world's enticements—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The lust of the flesh and eyes indicates a strong desire, much like Eve's desire to eat the banned fruit in the Garden of Eden. Lust moves one towards sin and separation from God. Keep in mind, too, the flesh is that which is opposed to God and often is indicative of the arrogance of one's ego. The "pride of life" is a similar, prideful type of self-sufficient attitude. Basing one's life only on the temporal and material ultimately will lead to disappointment and destruction.

John flatly recognized the temporality of the world and commended the one who does the lasting will of God. In this case, the will of God may be translated to refer to the command to love God and others sacrificially, or with "agape" love. Loving others with agape is impossible without a relationship with Jesus Christ. In other words, although we do not love the world, we love people who live in the world because we are Christians.

### **Enemies of the gospel (2:18-23)**

John next warned against false teachers trying to deceive believers. He urgently prefaced his thoughts by stating, "It is the last hour!" The "last hour" may be interpreted in a variety of ways, and John seemed to leave the phrase purposefully open-ended. However, John stressed Jesus was and is returning soon. We know these are the last days because many false teachers roam the world. John refers to these false teachers as "antichrists." Much has been made of the term "antichrist" for many years. This lesson is not the place to debate or argue the varied interpretations.

Suffice it to say, John referred simply to an adversary of Jesus, and John stated many of them had scattered to influence the world in an evil manner.

We will examine these particular false teachings in the next lesson. John seemed to focus most emphatically on Gnostic heretics—those who denied the full divinity and full humanity of Jesus Christ. John further indicates false teachers reveal their hypocrisy when they fall away from fellowship with the church.

### **Faithful to the gospel (2:24-27)**

Genuine believers keep the faith and exhibit the power of the Holy Spirit. The promise John referred to indicates both a present and future promise. Salvation is based on God's faithfulness and not human achievement. Accordingly, those who live and walk in the light live in fellowship with God and have eternal security, even though false teachers try desperately to lead Christians astray. John spoke of God's "anointing" on the Christians' life. This anointing is not a strange, mystical or magical thing only reserved for super-believers. The anointing is how God's Spirit brings people to know rightly the truth of God's word and remain firmly planted in it.