

Deceptions & Truth

1 John 2:18-27

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1 John 2:12-17 Summary: John describes the three stages of Christians... little children, young adults and parents. We should all strive for being parents but consider ourselves as young adults. We should also resist the three temptations associated with loving the world: *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.*

Applications from this passage...

- Spiritual growth is important
- Loving the world is deadly

1 John 2:18-19 – The Spirit of Antichrist.

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 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 they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

What does it tell us about the Apostle John in his declaring it is the last hour?

John lived in the constant expectancy of Jesus' return. This is an expectancy that we should also have, knowing that the Lord's return can come at any time.

What does it mean that the Antichrist is coming?

John here refers to an individual who has captured the imagination of many people, including those who don't even know the Bible.

- The prefix *anti* can mean "the opposite of" or "instead of." The *Antichrist* is the "opposite Jesus"; he is the "instead of" Jesus.

Which is more accurate, the Antichrist is opposite or instead of Jesus?

Most people have focused on the idea of the "opposite Jesus." This has made them think that the Antichrist will appear as a *supremely evil* person. They think that as much as Jesus went around doing good, the Antichrist will go around doing bad.

- As much as Jesus' character and personality were beautiful and attractive, the Antichrist's character and personality will be ugly and repulsive.

- As much as Jesus spoke only truth, the Antichrist will speak only lies.

The Antichrist will instead be more of an "instead of Jesus." He will look wonderful, be charming and successful. He will be the ultimate winner, and appear as an angel of light.

Will the Antichrist be an individual or a political system?

Both... a man does represent and personify an entire government or system; when we think of Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, the figures of Hitler as an individual and Nazi Germany as a state are virtually the same. The Antichrist is an individual, but he will also be associated with a powerful government.

What is the distinction between the Antichrist that is coming and the many antichrists that have come?

There is a "spirit" of antichrist, and this "spirit" of antichrist will one day find its ultimate fulfillment in *the Antichrist*, who will lead humanity in an end-times rebellion against God.

- Though the world still waits to see the ultimate revealing of the Antichrist, there are little "previews" of this man and his mission to come.

How do we know we are in the last hour before the Lord returns?

The presence of *many antichrists* — of many people who offer a false, substitute Christ — is evidence of the lateness in the hour before Jesus' coming.

- John writes that this was true in his day; and it is even *truer* in our own time.

Where else in the Bible do we find the term antichrist?

It is only in the letters of John and that only five times in four verses (1 John 2:18, 22, 4:3; 2 John 1:7). But the Antichrist goes by many titles:

- The *little horn* in Daniel 7:8.
- The *king of fierce countenance* in Daniel 8:23.
- The *Prince that shall come* in Daniel 9:26.
- The *willful king* in Daniel 11:36-45.
- The one who comes *in his own name* in John 5:43.
- The *son of perdition*, the *man of sin*, and the *lawless one* in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 and 2:8.
- The *beast* in Revelation

So, who is the Antichrist?

The Antichrist is a world dictator who leads humanity in what seems to be a golden age, until he shows his true colors — and the judgment of God is poured out on him and his empire immediately before the return of Jesus.

- The world stage is set for a political and economic “superman” to arise, a single leader to organize a world-dominating confederation of nations.
- National leaders speak of a new world order, but no one has been able to really define it, much less lead it. Yet this leader is coming.

v19 – What does it mean that *they went out from us*?

This shows that many of these *antichrists* at one time or another identified themselves with Christian communities. The fact that they left the body of Christ demonstrated that they *were not of us* to begin with.

- This is not talking about someone who leaves one church to begin attending another good church. It refers to those who leave the community of God’s people all together. This reveals that they were never really part of God’s people to begin with.

Why will true Christians be a part of a community of Christians?

John 13:35 – *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

People demonstrate their love by being together... people want to be with the ones they love.

Why will falsely professing Christians eventually leave the community of Christians?

The compromising and false Christian will not feel comfortable setting down roots in a healthy church — he will either get right with God or leave.

1 John 2:20-23 – Identifying the spirit of antichrist.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

What does it mean, *you have an anointing*?

Here John referred to a common anointing, belonging to all believers. This is an anointing that makes discernment possible for those who seek it in the Lord (*and you know all things*).

- When the New Testament speaks of *anointing*, it speaks of it as the common property of all believers.
- The New Testament does not speak of a “special” anointing given to particular individuals.

What is the anointing that all Christians have?

Anointing has the idea of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

- As *oil* was used for the inauguration of persons in important offices, this oil was acknowledged to be an emblem of the *gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit*.

This idea of *anointing* — literally, to be blessed with oil — was said to be the reason behind one of the punishments given to John in persecution.

- The Roman emperor Domitian cast John in a boiling vat of oil, as if to say, “Here is a real anointing.” John emerged from the vat of boiling oil unharmed, because he was anointed indeed.

How is it, *you know all things*?

The anointing of the Holy Spirit gives all believers the resources they need for knowing the truth.

- This isn’t to say that teachers are unnecessary, because one of the resources for knowing the truth is the reminder given by teachers like John.

Here John used a different word for “*know*” than he mostly used before. Previously John used the word meaning *knowledge by experience*; here he used the word meaning *knowledge by intuition*.

v21 – Why was John writing this letter to Christians?

Not because they did not know the truth, but because they did and was able to recognize lies about spiritual matters when they heard them.

v22 – Who is a liar?

One who denies that Jesus is the Christ. The context makes it clear that to affirm *that Jesus is the Christ* has to do with more than just saying, “He is the Messiah.” It has to do with understanding the relationship between Jesus and God the Father: *He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.*

- Someone could say, “I believe Jesus is the Christ... *as I define “Christ.”*”
- But we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, as the Bible defines **Christ** — the Messiah, who is fully God and fully man; who perfectly revealed the Father to us.

What is the spirit of antichrist?

It is denial of Jesus and the Father as the Bible has revealed them.

- Note that Jesus and the Father can be denied even by those who seem to speak well of them both.

How can one who professes to know Jesus deny Him?

Jesus can be praised but at the same time denied by offering a substitute Jesus or by ministering in a manner that denies the character of Jesus.

How is it that those who *deny the Son do not have the Father either*?

John here repeated an idea that Jesus expressed often... Jesus said, *He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me* (John 12:44-45). *He who receives Me receives Him who sent Me* (John 13:20).

How does this address the claim that we all worship the same God despite having different names?

Here is the question to ask in response: “Was your God perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ?” If your God was, then you have the same God.

- If your God wasn’t perfectly revealed in Jesus, then you do not have the same God as in the Bible.
- Also: Those who reject Jesus reject God.

1 John 2:24-27 – Let truth abide in you.

²⁴ *Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.*

²⁵ *And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.* ²⁶ *These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.* ²⁷ *But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.*

v24 – What is the “therefore” there for?

In light of the danger of the spirit of antichrist, we protect ourselves against it by abiding in the original, core Christian message (that *which you heard from the beginning*). As we walk in the simplicity and power of that message, we will not be led astray.

Why do people have a propensity to be attracted to what is new?

Humans, by nature, almost always think of *new* as *better*. But when it comes to *truth*, new is not better. That *which you heard from the beginning* is better.

- The apostle Paul communicated the same idea in Galatians 1:6-9, where he warns against going after a new gospel and emphasizes the importance of continuing on in the original gospel that Paul taught.

What was that *which you heard from the beginning*?

This does not describe whatever teaching any Christian might receive when he is newly following Jesus. *The beginning*, for these believers, describes the time when they were under the teaching of the apostles, which is now recorded for us in the New Testament.

How may we *abide in what is from the beginning*?

This is an admonition to stay close to our Bibles.

- If that was your environment when you were a young Christian, wonderful. But if it was not, then put yourself in that environment now.

What does it mean to abide in God’s Word?

This doesn’t mean just knowing it, but *living* in it.

- When we are living in the simplicity of the truth of Jesus Christ, then we will *abide in the Son and in the Father*.
- If someone wants to really *live in God*, John tells us how: let the message of the apostles (*which you heard from the beginning*) live in you.

Does knowing God’s Word mean you *know God*?

Not necessarily because people can have an intellectual knowledge of God’s Word. But, “If God’s Word *lives* in you, *God* lives in you.” We can come to a living, growing, relationship with God through His Word.

What does it mean that if we abide in Him, He abides in us?

It is a two-way relationship. And it takes both parties participating to have a relationship. The ball is in our court to keep that relationship active.

v25 – What has God promised us?

When His truth (what we *heard from the beginning*) lives in us, then God lives in us.

- When God lives in us, we have the promise that our *eternal life* is real.

What is *eternal life*?

This is not mere immortality. Every human being, is immortal, in the sense that our souls will live *forever*, either in heaven or in hell.

- So, *eternal life* doesn't just mean a life that lasts for eternity. It describes the kind of life that God, the *Eternal One*, has in Himself.
- While *eternal life* refers to the life beyond this present world, it doesn't just begin when we die.
- If we don't have *eternal life* now, we won't get it when we die.

This is why it is so important to have the *promise* of eternal life right now.

v26 – Why did John write about these things?

John knew there was deception among these early Christians, and it concerned him. He had a passion to keep them consistent with God's message of truth.

v27 – Why is the anointing and abiding important?

This abiding and anointing is what enables Christians to continue in the truth.

Why do Christians *not need that anyone teach you*?

Just as he stated in 1 John 2:20 (*you know all things*), John tells us again that the anointing we receive from God guides us into truth. We are guided into truth on a one-on-one level, God confirming it to our hearts.

- Because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit given to all believers, they possess the resources for knowing the truth.
- This is not to say that teachers are unnecessary, because one of the resources for knowing the truth is the reminder given by teachers like John.

This anointing which guides us into truth will also guide us closer to Jesus.

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- The Spirit of antichrist is deceptive... the best defense is growing closer to God to know the truth.
- It is important to abide in Christ which means experiencing a relationship with Him.