

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN

ANTICHRISTS, ANOINTING AND ABIDING!

Read 1 John 2:18-27

Introduction

The church at Ephesus and elsewhere in Asia Minor had been wounded by a group of people who turned out to be enemies of Christ. For a while they blended in with the Christian community to subvert it. But apparently their true colours had been exposed and together they left the church.

In the previous verse, John observed that the world is passing away. Here, he notes that this is "the last hour." Jesus had taught about the perils of this time-period, when *"False Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect -- if that were possible."* (Mark 13:22)

John frames his teaching in almost cosmic language -- antichrists, anointing, and abiding. In this lesson we'll explore each of these terms and consider their implications for our own time.

Antichrists in the Church

"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." (1 John 2:18)

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

The term "antichrist" is an actual word that mainly occurs only in John's letters -- 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7. "Antichrist" (a transliteration from the Greek word *antichristos*, means literally "adversary of the Messiah."). In the apocalyptic literature of the Bible, we see various mentions of a figure who will appear in the end times as an opponent of God and his Messiah.

- Daniel seems to refer to this antichrist figure as "the prince who will come" (Daniel 9:26a) and who will set up in the temple "an abomination that causes desolation" (Daniel 9:27).
- Jesus warns, "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel," you are to flee (Matthew 24:15).
- Paul seems to be referring to this same antichrist figure as "the man of sin [lawlessness]" who will set himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). Paul insisted that this figure has not yet appeared on the world scene (2 Thessalonians 2:7).
- Revelation refers to the antichrist figure as the "beast coming out of the sea" (Revelation 13:1), who acts as a puppet of Satan (13: 4), makes war against Christian believers (13:7), and causes the unbelievers to worship him (13:8).

John affirms that "the antichrist is coming" -- that is, not yet revealed. However, "even now many antichrists have come" (1 John 2:18). These enemies of Christ that have been in the church are not the antichrist who is to come, but they have been influenced by "the spirit of the antichrist" (4:3), in the same way that Paul had taught that "the secret power of lawlessness is already at work" (2 Thessalonians 2:7), even though the man of lawlessness had not been revealed.

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

The Enemies Leave the Church

“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.” (v19)

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. John wasn't talking about someone who leaves one church to begin attending another good church. He meant 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.

We can imagine the scene. There is some controversy among people at a church, and someone responds by saying, “I'm so sick of all this. This church and all churches, they're just a bunch of hypocrites. I don't need any of this. I can follow God my own way!” They leave; not just a church, but they leave any kind of church. We can fairly say that this person does not appear to be a Christian, and their appearance demonstrates that they never really were a Christian.

One must beware of those who seem to be so “spiritual” that they can't get along in any church. One sees these from time to time: people who seem to be so gifted, so prophetic, or so spiritual that they get kicked out or leave in a huff from every church they go to. Finally, they are just left to themselves, and they seem happy enough with that. Fellowship with themselves is at least fellowship with someone as spiritual as they are! Of course, there is something seriously wrong with such so-called spirituality.

A healthy church can purge itself of poisons; 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.

An Anointing from the Holy One

“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.” (vv20-21)

In terms of the “anointing”, 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. This is true even though all believers may not be walking in the anointing God has given them.

Anointing has the idea of being filled with and blessed by the Holy Spirit. This is something that is the common property of all Christians, but something we can and should become more submitted and responsive to. Because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit given to all believers, they possess the resources for knowing the truth. This isn't to say that teachers are unnecessary, because one of the resources for knowing the truth is the reminding given by teachers like John.

In verse 20, 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*”. We know some things intuitively by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Denying the Father and the Son

“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.” (vv22-23)

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**. In other words, 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.

The spirit of antichrist identifies itself by its denial of Jesus and its denial of the Father. John here repeated an idea that Jesus expressed often, as recorded in the Gospel of John. 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).

Often, it is said, “We all worship the same God. You have one name for Him and I have another. But that doesn’t matter. We are just talking about different roads to the same God because we all have the same God.” 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.

There are many people who seem rather spiritual or religious yet reject Jesus Christ. While their religion or spirituality may do them much good in this life — giving them a basis for morality and good behaviour — it does them nothing before God, because in rejecting Jesus they reject God.

Remaining in the Father and Son

“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. And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.” (vv24-25)

Considering the danger of the spirit of antichrist, we protect ourselves against the spirit of antichrist 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. Humans, by nature, are almost always attracted to something just because it is new. We 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.

Our world is filled with people searching for God, some sincerely and some insincerely. But 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. John did not say, “If you know God’s Word, you know God,” because someone can have a bare, intellectual knowledge of God’s Word. But he did say, “If God’s Word lives in you, God lives in you.” We can come to a living, growing, relationship with God through His Word.

His Anointing Teaches You

“These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. 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.” (vv26-27)

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. The anointing which you have received from Him abides in you means this abiding and anointing is what enables Christians to continue in the truth. John first referred to this anointing back in 1 John 2:20. This anointing is not the private property of a few special or spectacular Christians. All Christians have the presence of God’s Spirit within them.

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. Again, John's message is simple. 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.