

Beware of the Antichrists, Know that Real Believers Remain

(1 John 2:18–23)

What is True & What to Do:

False teachers will actively oppose Christ and His Gospel; Christians must reject their false teachings and adhere to the truth of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Bible.

How do you distinguish between a false teacher and a true Christian teacher?

1.) The Leaving of False Teachers from the Church Confirms their Unsaved Status (v. 18–19)

- False teachers leave the church. Why?
 - “They did **not belong** to us.” (The old saying is true: “Faith that fizzles before the finish was faulty from the start”)
 - To **make clear** to true church members that false teachers are not part of the true church

2.) The Holy Spirit Leads Christians into all Truth and Confirms Us (v.20–21)

- But **YOU** have an anointing from the Holy One. All Christians have knowledge of the truth. You do not need new, special, or secret knowledge from false teachers. To know Christ is to have “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3)
 - “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you (Jn. 14:16–18).
 - “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but

whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come (Jn. 16:13).

- John is not writing because **Christians** do not know the truth. They do know the truth! Look nowhere else.
- “No lie is of the truth”; John means **nothing untrue** comes from proper Christian teaching or belief. God cannot lie (Num. 23:19). John said, “Your Word is truth” (Jn. 17:17)

3.) To Deny the Son is to Deny the Father Also (v. 22–23)

- A rejection of Jesus as Messiah is also a **rejection** of God the Father. All religions do NOT worship the same God. Islam and Judaism deny Christ and do not worship the true God.
- God revealed Himself through **His son**; you can’t say you believe in the one true living God and reject Jesus who is God in the flesh. Those who reject Jesus as fully God and fully Human are “the antichrist” (small ‘A’, opposed to Christ,)
- It does not matter who you are; pastor, angel, bible scholar; you cannot believe in God and not believe in Jesus!
- **Jesus said** to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (Jn. 14:6).
- You cannot be in a **right relationship** with God unless you openly acknowledge Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and believe the Gospel, making Him your personal Lord and Savior. Anything less and you do not have access to the Father. That is, you do not know the God that can save you from the fires and torments of Hell (Jude. 1:23, Lk. 16:19-31).

APPLICATION (v. 18-23):

- ✓ Beware of false teachers; search the scriptures and avoid being led astray by wrong doctrine. Lovingly point people to the truth; do not ignore errant beliefs in the church.
- ✓ Scripture is our authority, not our feelings or emotions which can be deceiving and led astray by sinful desires. (Example: no, it is not God’s will for you to move-in with your boy/girl friend and live together unmarried. It violates Scripture no matter how you “feel”).

- ✓ You should live your life on guard for spiritual error vs. truth (if you have been saved and know God’s Word and are not stifling the Spirit or allowing sin to cloud your judgment). John assures his followers that *every* Christian bears the Spirit and so the average believer does not need to be led around as if uninformed: 2:20, “you have an anointing [...] and all of you know!” Next week, we will look at 2:27, which says: “the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need any one to teach you!”
- ✓ Don’t fall prey to the temptation of obtaining secret knowledge, special or new revelation, or teachings of charismatic people who promise ‘new light’ similar to the Gnostics in John’s day.
- ✓ Encourage one another who are Christians to make use of their two most valuable defenses against heresy, namely the truth of the gospel and the Holy Spirit. Remember you have access to the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10–23) in matters of spiritual truth and error; Christians are never alone. The “[Holy] Spirit is not separated from Jesus; the Spirit is Jesus himself returned to us in power. He is Jesus-in-Spirit. John makes this clear in the Farewell Discourse of his Gospel (John 14–16). The coming Spirit is portrayed as the returning Jesus; the promised Spirit-experience is also a Jesus-experience.”¹
- ✓ John’s letter talks a lot about the love of the community. First John 2:10–11 is a clarion call to fidelity and unity in the body of Christ. Unity is seriously valued by John. However, ***there comes a time when leadership must sacrifice unity for the sake of the truth.*** Sometimes right belief is more important than cohesion and oneness. Unity is not the ultimate virtue in the Christian faith. John here is a coconspirator in the splitting of his church because he has stood firm in the truth. Certainly he mourned for these people, but he did not regret his decision (2:18–19).² Unity that does not safeguard the truth of Jesus Christ is not a unity that glorifies God.
- ✓ Perseverance is the ultimate test of genuine participation in the life of Christ. Those who are truly saved will persevere. This means you do not need to question your salvation if you 1) have been anointed by the Holy One, and 2) know the truth centered in Jesus Christ, and 3) keep on abiding in Him.

CHRISTIANS KNOW THE TRUTH.

THE WORD OF GOD, LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, TEACHES US EVERYTHING NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE.

CONSIDER THE SEVEN THINGS CHRISTIANS ARE SAID TO KNOW IN 1 JOHN:

(We will look at these in detail over the coming weeks)

1. “We know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments” (2:3).
2. “We know that when he appears we shall be like him” (3:2).
3. “We know we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers” (3:14).
4. “By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him” (3:19).
5. “We know he abides in us” (3:24).
6. “And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him” (5:15).
7. “We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him” (5:18).³

NOTES:

¹ Gary M. Burge, *Letters of John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 139.

² Burge, 141.

³ David L. Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God’s Family*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 114.