

12. The Epistle of 1 John—2:20-27

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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1 John 2:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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.

If you study the history of the cults like the J.W.'s, the Mormons and other groups like Armstrong's World-Wide Church of God, Christian Science, 7th Day Adventists—you will discover that their founders started out *in a local church!*

They were “with us” but not “of us,” so they went out “from us” and started their own groups.

Acts 20:29-31 (NKJV)

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

1 John 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

In saying this, John isn't saying that Christians have some mystical, esoteric 'anointing' from the Holy Spirit that allows them to look into the spirit realm and know 'all things' that are hidden from the 'un-anointed' (like having a magic crystal ball or Joseph Smith's magic glasses...).

John is picking up on the language of the Gnostics who believed and taught that they possessed special knowledge (deep mystical, hidden knowledge) of spiritual things (the word 'gnostic' comes from the Greek word for *knowledge*) which allowed them to know all the secrets of spiritual wisdom and knowledge—knowledge that even the apostles didn't possess.

As we have already said—Gnosticism was one of the main cults the early church had to fight against. All of the writers of the New Testament came against it—including Paul who said:

Colossians 2:3-4 (NLT2)

³ In Him [Jesus] lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments.

When John says in verse 20 that “**you have an anointing from the Holy One**”, he is talking to Christians in general about the Holy Spirit living inside of them, sent from the “Holy One”, Jesus Christ—

John 14:16-17a, 16:13 (NKJV)

¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth...

John 16:13 (NKJV)

¹³ ...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

When John says to Christians, “you have an anointing from the Holy One, **and you know all things**” he doesn’t mean we know everything there is to know in the world—he is saying we know all things necessary to be saved (the gospel) and walk with God.

2 Peter 1:2-3 (NKJV)

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.

And so, the “**anointing**” John is speaking of is the Holy Spirit whom Jesus gives to each believer at conversion (Romans 8:9). This “anointing” (Holy Spirit) allows us to know truth from error.

One author said,

“The presence of the Holy Spirit in every believer enables him or her to perceive the truth of the gospel and to distinguish it from error. Of course, some Christians have more perception than others due to God-given ability, Satanic blindness, the influence of human teachers, sin in the life, etc.”

Another author put it this way—

*“When a person is saved, he receives the indwelling Holy Spirit, and He enables the believer to discern between truth and error. When John tells his young readers “**you know all things**,” he does not mean this in an absolute sense. It is not that they have perfect knowledge, but rather that they have the capacity to recognize what is true and what is not. Thus the youngest, simplest believer has the capacity of discernment in divine things that an unsaved philosopher would not have.”*

1 John 2:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. ²¹ **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.**

By saying this, John wants them to know he isn’t writing to tell them anything new in the way of spiritual truth—they have God’s word for themselves and in that regard “know all-things”—or in other words, they know everything they need to know for salvation and to live their Christian life.

There is nothing new John wants to share with them, only to remind them of what he had already taught them and to encourage them to keep walking in that truth—

3 John 1:4 (NKJV)

⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

The statement, “**no lie is of the truth**” seems so obvious we wonder why John felt the need to say something so axiomatic—until we remember he was coming against the heresies of several first century cults.

They presented doctrines that contradicted the teaching of God's word—but told their followers that these teachings came from God. John is stating the obvious but believes it still needs to be said that—no lie (false doctrine from the devil) can also, at the same time, be truth from God.

Lies and truth are mutually exclusive—'one plus one' cannot be two *and* three at the same time!

Neither can Jesus be the 'Creator of all things' (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16) *and* at the same time be a created being (Jehovah Witness teaching).

Author and commentator J.B. Phillips put it well—

*"Truth is confined to what the Bible says (John 17:17). "No lie is of the truth." There are many subtle, attractive, and persuasive lies in the world. The Devil is very clever in inventing them and men are very zealous in propagating them. Still, when all is said and done, a lie is a lie and not the truth. The theory of evolution is a lie—albeit a very popular one—and it is promoted by a vast number of very clever people.
It contradicts the Bible, however, as to the creation and fall of man; therefore, it is a lie. All the cults teach lies, all the world's religions deny Christ and propagate lies—even though those who proclaim them are passionately convinced that they have embraced the truth."*

1 John 2:22-23 (NKJV)

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.

John's statement in verse 23 is very definitive—anyone who denies the Person and work of Jesus Christ ("denies the Son") does not know God (is not a true Christian)—period, end of story!

All of the cults deny either the Person or work of Jesus Christ, or both—and yet they all believe they are the only true people of God!

They all deny that Jesus is Almighty God, Second Person of the Trinity (if they believe in the Trinity).

They claim He is a lesser god (the first creation of Jehovah God) or that He is the brother of Lucifer or that He is Michael the Archangel.

As we said to start our study in 1 John—the first century Gnostics believed that the physical universe (matter) was evil and therefore Jesus couldn't have come in the flesh (with a physical body) because then—He would have been evil.

So many Gnostics claimed He must have come as a *spirit* and not as a physical flesh and blood man (a denial of His humanity).

Other Gnostics believed that since Jesus *was* a physical man (too much evidence to deny that truth) and that since the physical was evil and God cannot be evil—they concluded that Jesus couldn't have been *God* in the flesh (a denial of His divinity).

One commentator continues with this—

"Docetists taught that Jesus was not truly a man and therefore not our Savior. Followers of Cerinthus believed that Jesus was not fully God, but that God only came upon Him at His baptism and departed from Him before His crucifixion. These false teachers all claimed to have the truth from God. However, John pointed out that since the Son and the Father are one, a person cannot deny the Son without denying the Father as well."

Matthew 10:32-33 (NKJV)

"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Mark 8:38 (NKJV)

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

So, all of the cults deny the *Person* of Jesus Christ in some way—but further, they all deny the *work* of Jesus as well.

All the cults deny the crucifixion and/or the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the grave—many teach that He was raised a spirit but not with a physical body (J.W.'s).

Many liberal theologians deny the resurrection of Christ all-together.

Those belonging to the "Jesus Seminar" teach one of a number of 'resurrection' heresies—a couple being:

- *The disciples stole the body and then fabricated the resurrection story.*
- *The Romans took the body of Jesus down from the cross and threw it into a shallow grave where it was eaten by dogs.*

1 John 2:23-24 (NKJV)

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. **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.**

What John is admonishing them to let *abide* (remain, continue) in them is God's truth—especially that which involves the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Person and work (death and resurrection) of Christ is essential for salvation—and therefore it has always been the enemies target to corrupt with damning heresy.

This continuing in the faith won't 'earn' them eternal life (salvation)—it will be an evidence (fruit) of their relationship with Jesus—"If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples..." (John 8:31).

Warren Wiersbe—

It is important that you stay with the truth of God's Word. The Word (or message) Christians have "heard from the beginning" is all you need to keep you true to the faith. The Christian life continues just as it began: through faith in the Bible's message. A religious leader who comes along with "something new," something that contradicts what Christians have "heard from the beginning," is not to be trusted...Let the Word abide in you (1 John 2:24), and abide in Christ (1 John 2:28); otherwise you will be led astray by the spirit of antichrist. No matter what false teachers may promise, you have the sure promise of eternal life (1 John 2:25). You need nothing more!

I have to believe that when John wrote these words down, he had Jesus' teaching in mind which He taught to His disciples the night before His crucifixion—

John 15:4-5 (NKJV)

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

1 John 2:26 (NKJV)

These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to* deceive you.

The Greek could be translated *“those who try to seduce you and lead you astray.”*

The Spirit of God laid it upon the other New Testament writers to warn us about those who, coming into the church, would seek to lead Christians astray—especially in the last days:

1 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.

John 4:1 (NKJV)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

One author had this to say—

“It is interesting to observe that antichristian groups rarely try to lead lost sinners to their false faith. Instead, they spend much of their time trying to convert professing Christians (and church members, at that) to their own doctrines. They are out to “seduce” the faithful... We should not accept everything a person tells us simply because he claims to believe the Bible, for it is possible to “twist” the Bible to make it mean almost anything.”

2 Peter 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ [Paul] as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

1 John 2:26-27 (NKJV)

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.**

Once again, when John says, **“the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you”** he’s referring to the Holy Spirit indwelling every believer in Christ.

When he goes on to say, **“and you do not need that anyone teach you...”** he is not saying that Christians don’t need pastors and teachers in the Church to teach them anything.

If that was what John was saying—he wouldn't have bothered to write them this epistle to teach them in the first place!

Besides, Paul told us in Ephesians 4 that Jesus Himself— *“gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some [teaching] pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Rather, what John is emphasizing here is that we have within us as Christians the only Teacher that really matters—the Holy Spirit!

If you want to know and understand the Bible—you don't have to look any further than the Spirit of God—the Author Who wrote it!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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