

CHRIST AND ANTICHRIST

1 John 2:18-25

Intro: I hope that you are continuing to read 1 John at least once each week while we are studying it in our Sunday morning services. I believe that the more you read through books of the Bible at one sitting, the more you will enjoy reading the Bible that way. All of us live with pressure as far as time is concerned, but we all do what we want to do, and what we ought to have the greatest priority in our lives, is the reading of the Word of God. I realize that some of the books of Scripture are too long to think of reading them through at one time, but if we are studying a book like Genesis, we need to divide it up so that in a relatively short period of time we can read it through as soon as possible. When Professor Felix comes for our Spring Bible Conference which will begin just two weeks from today, he will speak, as we have been mentioning, on Psalm 119 – the longest chapter in the Bible. I am sure that those of us who read Psalm 119 through several times in preparation for Professor Felix’s messages, will get the most out of his messages. But it is probably true that few Christians have read that Psalm through at one sitting. It will be good for all of us to practice on Psalm 119. Then reading some of the shorter books of the Bible, like 1 John, will not seem like such an overwhelming task.

Now that is my commercial for today.

What have we been learning from 1 John so far? We have learned that the Apostle John was writing to some group of Christians toward the end of the first century, who needed to be assured that they were saved. We learn this from 1 John, chapter 5, and verse 13. (Quote.) To do this we have seen that he first emphasized the sinless character of God, and then went on to tell them about four tests that they could apply to their lives as ways they could determine if they were saved, or not. These are the tests:

- 1) The test of sin.
- 2) The test of obedience to God’s Word.
- 3) The test of love for the people of God.
- 4) The test of worldliness.

Today we come to a fifth test: this is the test of correct doctrine, and the doctrine, or teaching (because that is what doctrine is) that the Apostle John singled out because its tremendous importance, is *the doctrine of Jesus Christ*.

In chapter 1, as I have already mentioned, we had a brief look at the doctrine of God. It is in verse 5 of chapter 1. (Read.) “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” This means that *God is holy, and in Him is no sin at all.*

But what does the Bible teach us about man, about ourselves? We all know, or should know, that man was made in the likeness of God. But we also know, or should know, that man did in the Garden of Eden what God told him not to do. This was before Adam and Eve had any children. And so Adam and Eve, who had been created without sin, became sinners, and when they had children the Bible says that “Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Gen. 5:3). This means that Adam who had become a sinner, begat children who were sinners. And that has been going on in the human family ever since. Just before the flood in Noah’s day, we are told in Genesis 6:5,

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

So just the opposite was true of man that was true of God. God is holy, and always has been; man is a sinner and by birth, by nature, has no holiness at all. This is the problem in the world today. God is holy; man is a sinner. And man would have been hopeless in his sin if God had not taken the initiative in solving the problem. What did He do? The Apostle John tells us right here in 1 John in more than one place. In 1 John 4:14, for example, John wrote,

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

Who is this Son to whom the Apostle Peter was referring. You all know, but let me point out his identify in this epistle that we are studying. If there is anyone reading this epistle who does not know, when he or she gets down to verse 3 of the very first chapter, he or she will learn. There the Apostle John wrote, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

What did He do to become “the Savior of the world”? He Who has existed eternally with the Father, and Who has the same nature as His Father, a totally sinless nature, came into this world, became a human being, born of a virgin mother, in order that He might die to secure the salvation of sinners, was raised triumphantly from the dead, went back to heaven where He lives to intercede on behalf of all who are saved. John 3:16 tells the whole story:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

And so the Apostle Paul wrote concerning salvation in Ephesians 2:8 and 9:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

So salvation is a gift, not a reward. It is by grace, not works. It is by faith in what Christ has done for us, not because of anything that we have done for God. This is the only Gospel. It is only through Jesus Christ that we can be saved. There is no other Gospel; there is no other Savior. But in the first verse of my text, the Apostle John said that there were people who were not preaching the true Gospel. He called the *antichrist*, and he said that there were “many antichrists.”

We are accustomed to hearing of *the Antichrist*, the man of sin who will appear during the Great Tribulation, but that is not what the Apostle John was emphasizing here in 1 John 2. The Apostle John is the only one in the NT who uses this word. We find it three times here in 1 John: in chapter 2, verses 18 and 22, and then in 4:3. The only other time John or anyone else used it is in 2 John 7. (Read.)

Bishop Westcott who taught at Cambridge University back in the late 1800's is one among many who has defined the word *antichrist*. He said that it means one who is against Christ, but it also means one who puts himself in the place of Christ. They had many such teachers back in the first century, and there have been countless antichrists down through the history of the church.

There are several important things that the Apostle John tells us about the antichrists. In verse 22 of our text he said that an antichrist is one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, and also denies “the Father and the Son.” An anti-christ is a liar. Then in 1 John 4:3 he tells us that every person who does not confess “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.” And in 2 John 7 calls the antichrists, “deceivers, and again that they “confess not that Jesus Christ is come in flesh.”

All of these statements mean that antichrists oppose the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sometimes they oppose Christ just by not mentioning Him. At other times they are opening opposed to any teaching that makes Jesus

Christ the only Savior. Pastors and preachers are sometimes antichrists.

Those in our armed forces who refuse to let chaplains pray in the Name of Christ, or to preach that Christ is the only Savior, are antichrists. The preacher who talks about God, but has nothing to say about the Lord Jesus Christ, is an antiChrist.

Now John began this section by pointing out that we are in the last time. By this he meant the period of time leading up to the coming of the Lord. It even means that all true prophecy which needs to be fulfilled before the Lord will return, has been fulfilled. But those antichrists were using the departure from the church of many who had professed faith in Christ, as proof that the Gospel that the Apostle John and others faithfully preached, was not the true Gospel. But the Apostle John explains what was happening in verse 19. (Explain.)

But then he explained in verse 20 what was true of all genuine believers in Christ, and why they would never depart. He spoke of “an unction” that they had “from the Holy One.” In verse 27 which I do not plan to get to today, the Apostle John used the same word, but there it is translated, “anointing.” This something that is true of all believers. It is a gift which all believers have. It is not something that they have to seek; they have it. Coming from “the Holy One” means that whatever it is, it is a gift from either our Holy Father or the Holy Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 27 the Apostle John spoke of “the same anointing teacheth you of all things.” So it seems clear that the “unction,” or “the anointing,” is a reference to the Holy Spirit. And “the Holy One” (v.20) from Whom this anointing has been received, must be the Father (see John 14:26), but in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the Scriptures I use to support that statement.

In John 14:16 and 17 we find words spoken by our Lord to His disciples (and John was there) when they were in the Upper Room together. Listen to what He said to them:

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:16-17).

And then with regard to teaching, we have these words of our Lord in John 14:26:

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Now let me add one more passage from John 16. Here is more about the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit:

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:12-15).

In verse 20 of our text, this is why the Apostle John could say, “and ye know all things.” He did not mean that they knew everything that is possible for us to know even from the Word, but the Spirit would give us the understanding that we need to be kept from being deceived by the antichrists. And verse 21 indicates that that is what the Holy Spirit had been doing for them. The only way we can be kept from being deceived by the many antichrists who are in the world, is by being taught the truth by the Holy Spirit. What a tragedy it is that more Christians do not know what a safeguard the Holy Spirit is for us against all teaching that is not in accord with Scripture.

If we know the truth of God’s word, then we will recognize a liar when we hear one. This is the meaning of verses 22 and 23.

What an important verse is verse 24! The words “abide,” “remain,” and “continue” are all translations of the same verb in the Greek. It is the verb μένω. How you should thank God if you had a good beginning in the Word! Think this morning of those people who helped you to get a good start in the Scriptures. Perhaps you are thinking about your parents, as I am. Of faithful Sunday School teachers. Of pastors who prayed for us, and who faithfully taught us. Of mature Christians who helped us to understand even a little of God’s Word. If you had a good beginning, never turn away from it. Stick by what you have been taught. God does not change. The Lord Jesus does not change. The Word does not change. The Holy Spirit is still your Teacher. If you continue in the Word, you

will never turn away from either the Son or the Father.

In verse 25 the promise that the Apostle John was referring to, is the promise of salvation. It is the promise of God, and God has never yet broken the promise of salvation to anyone who believes. The promises of men regarding eternity are totally worthless. The promise of God is sure and certain. Only in the Scriptures do we have the true promise of eternal life. Jesus Christ is the only Savior. The Bible is God's Word, and God's Word is truth.

Concl: How do you score in the doctrinal test? Make sure that you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross.

There is no other way for sinners to have perfect and eternal acceptance with a Holy God. Sing from your heart if it is true:

On Christ, the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

There is no other Gospel. There is no other Savior.