

Lesson for August 28, 2005

The Book of I John

Chapter 2:18-23

Verse 18

“Little children, it is the last time, and ye have heard that antichrist shall come”

John addresses this verse to the young, immature Christians. The Greek word for children in this verse is “paidion” meaning infant. The “last time” that John is referring to is the Church Age, as the last dispensation in history before the return of Christ for His Church. This is confirmed by the remainder of the verse. We know from other passages that the Antichrist will appear during the dispensation of the Tribulation and attempt to establish himself as God.

Antichrist is the Greek word “antichristos” and is defined as a person who assumes the identity of Christ or opposes Christ. The spirit of antichrist is defined as anyone who lines up in opposition to Christ.

“The Antichrist” who is spoken of often in John’s writings (John 5:43; I John; Revelation) is a person that will be revealed during the dispensation of the Tribulation. This person is indwelt by Satan and is the one who deceives the entire world (except for a small group of believers) into believing that he is Christ, though in reality he opposes Christ. This dispensation begins immediately following the Rapture of the Church (the time when all Church Age believers will meet the Lord in the air), and will last for seven years. (II Thessalonians 2:1-12)

“even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time”

It is with this in mind that the Apostle John tells us that there are already those among us who exhibit the same spirit of “The Antichrist”, which is opposition to Christ. “The last time” is a reference to the Church Age period from Pentecost to the Rapture. Since there is no prophesy left to be fulfilled within this period, Christ could come back at any time after this age began (including the time in which John was writing).

Verse 19

“They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us”

The context seems to indicate that these people to whom John refers are unbelievers claiming to be believers, with the purpose of deceiving. We also see that these false teachers have infiltrated the local body of believers. Once again, it is a trick of Satan to counterfeit the truth, make his followers look like the believer and as a result deceive believers into believing a lie.

“but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us”

In the King James English, this phrase seems to indicate that some may have even been believers. However, the Greek makes it clear that this is not the case since this phrase should be more correctly translated “all were not of us.” The fact that these antichrists left the local church is an indication that perhaps they were never really a part of the fellowship as believers. *Manifest* in Greek is “phaneroo” and means to make visible, clear or known. These antichrists are hiding in disguise pretending to be believers, but upon leaving the local fellowship of believers they become exposed as false apostles teaching false doctrine.

Verse 20

“But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.”

The Greek word for *unction* is “chrisma” and means anointing. The anointing in this verse is the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. The anointing is not some special function of the Holy Spirit, “a second blessing” (where the believer gets a double portion of the Holy Spirit), or any act of the Holy Spirit apart from His teaching ministry to the believer. Even a novice Christian should be able to see this from the context of these passages.

It is John’s purpose not only to warn us, but also to help us recognize those who have the spirit of antichrist. John is reminding his readers that we have been anointed with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as our mentor and guide. It is only under the control of the Holy Spirit that a believer can detect heresy within the body of Christ. This heresy can be detected only by knowledge of truth from God’s Word. “Ye know things” simply means that you have the necessary information to detect the spirit of antichrist from Bible doctrine resident in your soul.

Verse 21

“I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.”

John goes on to tell us that it is through knowledge of God’s Word that we are able to distinguish between true and false doctrine. It is the Bible doctrine that you have stored in your soul that the Holy Spirit uses to teach you and to guide you. John indicates that this information has already been given to these believers and that they should be able to distinguish between the true and the false. A lie, regardless of how it is “packaged”, is still not truth. Since all believers are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they have the potential of learning accurate Bible doctrine. Failure to learn accurate doctrine will lead a believer into all manner of false, satanic doctrine. (I Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 13:7-9)

Verse 22

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.”

Anyone (believer or unbeliever) who denies the deity of Jesus Christ is antichrist (against Christ). Anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, sent from God the Father to save the world, is antichrist. The test of the spirit of antichrist is *the doctrinal accuracy of the message*. This is where it takes a greater amount of doctrine in the soul to discern the false from the true. Only through spiritual growth can a believer avoid being deceived by these false teachers. There are some obvious signs that a preacher or teacher is presenting false doctrine. For example, the motive of most false teachers is to seek fortune, fame and power. There are some ministers, however, that appear to be sincere and appear to have correct motives, but have allowed themselves to be deceived. Both are still teaching false doctrine and are enemies of the cross of Christ. (II Timothy 2:25-26; II Timothy 3:1-7)

Though these false teachers often use Biblical phrases, passages and Christian-sounding words, they distort the truth by taking passages out of context, ignoring dispensational truth or in some cases changing the meaning of God’s Word to fit their particular teaching. In some instances they even accidentally present truth. Satan is the “great counterfeiter.” Therefore, what his ministers teach is mixed with a small amount of truth in order to look like the real thing. Beware... you must always evaluate the message in light of the truth of God’s Word. (II Peter 2:1-22)

Verse 23

“Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.”

Denieth is the Greek word “arneomai” and means to say “not” or to contradict. Saying “not” to Jesus Christ is rejecting Him as Lord (God) and Savior. The person that does this will not have a relationship with God the Father, since the Father and Son are “one” (one in essence; co-equal and co-eternal). The Greek word for *acknowledgeth* is “homologeō” meaning to confess, to name, to admit or to acknowledge.

This acknowledgement is the same as faith in Christ as Savior (Messiah). The person that accepts Christ as Savior also receives an eternal relationship with the Father. Actually, the Father indwells the believer at salvation.

The Father indwells the believer for a specific purpose. Everything that we possess as believers is provided by the Father, through the agency of His Son Jesus Christ. As a guarantee to us of the Father’s eternal provision, God the Father indwells every believer. The Father is with us constantly to grant blessings beyond compare and above our imagination. He constantly pours out divine blessings to His children and bestows gifts of grace without measure. These blessings include such things as salvation, promises, doctrine, family, friends, and even physical needs. The Father is indwelling us in order to watch over and protect us, as any good father would do. (James 1:17-18)

The Father is with us to assure us of His love and care. As a loving Father, He is concerned with our welfare and continually shows His love for us by guiding and directing our paths through life. Like a good Father, He occasionally has to discipline His children in order to help them stay within His will. The Father’s correction is always for our good. (John 14:21; 15:8-10; 17:26; Hebrews 12:5-11)

The Father indwells the believer to guard him from the world system and to glorify Jesus Christ in the life of the believer. This was Christ’s prayer for you and me. Christ did not pray that the believer would be taken out of this world, but that the Father would safe-guard him while he was in the world. (John 17)