

Week 4 – 1 John 2:18-27

Warning Concerning the Antichrists

“Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.” ([John 2:22](#), ESV)

John has previously given us the **moral test of obedience** to God’s commandments ([1 John 2:3-6](#)). He has also given us the **relational test of love** ([1 John 2:7-11](#)). In these next verses, John gives us a third test by which we may evaluate the soundness of a teacher, as well as our own lives. He gives the **doctrinal test of truth** about the person and work of Jesus Christ ([1 John 2:18-27](#)). He says to avoid spiritual deception, be discerning of people and doctrine.

First, let’s consider who many consider the Antichrist to be. (Please note the difference in the capitalization of this name.)

“Most Bible prophecy/eschatology experts believe the Antichrist will be the ultimate embodiment of what it means to be against Christ. In the end times/last hour, a man will arise to oppose Christ and His followers more than anyone else in history. Likely claiming to be the true Messiah, the Antichrist will seek world domination and will attempt to destroy all followers of Jesus Christ and the nation of Israel.”

([What is the Antichrist?](#) from [Got Questions](#))

However, as we will discover in this section of 1 John 2, the antichrist(s) is quite a different concept.

- **2:18** – *“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.”*

The last hour began with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The phrase does not refer to the end of the world, but to the period preceding a crisis in the advance of Christ’s kingdom, a changeful and challenging period, marked by the appearance of “many antichrists.”

This is not an isolated idea presented only by John.

“For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.” ([Matthew 24:24](#))

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ([Acts 20:29-31](#))

Antichrist – *anti Christos* – one who is against Christ and/or one who seeks to replace Christ with a counterfeit Christ, a rival Christ. In 1 and 2 John, the emphasis is on those (plural) who oppose Christ, especially in their teaching. The antichrists think wrongly and believe incorrectly concerning who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. The false teachers rise within the church and present a system that subtly presents something instead of Jesus Christ. (See article links below.)

- **1 John 2:19** - *“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 it might become plain that they all are not of us.”*

This passage describes the separation of the genuine from the counterfeit. Jesus declared that the wheat and the tares “**would grow together until the harvest**” ([Matthew 13:24-30](#)).“

The **tares** are probably the weed known as “[darnel](#).” Its official name, *L. temulentum*, comes from a Latin word for “drunk.” “Darnel” usually grows in the same production zones as wheat

and is toxic and considered a weed. The similarity between these two plants is so great that, in some regions, dandelion is referred to as "false wheat". It bears a close resemblance to wheat and will not be apparent until the final harvest when the ear appears.

John here identifies three characteristics of individuals who manifested an antichrist spirit:

1. They depart from the fellowship – *"They went out from us . . ."*
2. They deny the truth that Jesus is the Christ – *"they were not [really] of us . . ."*
3. They attempt to deceive genuine believers. – *"become plain that they all are not of us."*

John is distinguishing between the genuine and the false in matters of doctrine, as he does in chapter 2 regarding matters of practice.

➤ **1 John 2:20 - *But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.***

John directs these remarks to his readers to assure them of their authenticity! He explains that his believing readers have the spiritual maturity to stand against the seductive lies of the antichrists. This contrasts with those who went out from the Body, proving they were not genuine believers.

"By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." ([1 John 4:13](#))

This anointing of the believers and the resulting knowledge distinguished those who remained in the Johannine community from those who left it.

➤ **1 John 2:21 – *"I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth."***

They know the truth beyond a "shadow of doubt." What he was writing to them was simply reminding them of the truth that they already knew. This is like the approach that Paul took with the Roman believers.

"I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God" ([Romans 15:14-15](#))

The knowledge that John's readers possess, but which those who "went out" (docetic or otherwise) lack, is the truth about the identity of Jesus: that he is the Christ and that he is by nature one with man and one with God.

This knowledge is not simply intellectual; it is part of the relationship between any person and God through Christ. It is the simple fact of the Christian life that things would be different at once if we would only put into practice what we already know.

John's point is that believers must not rely on human wisdom or man-centered philosophy ([1 Corinthians 1:18–2:9](#); [Colossians 2:8](#)), but on the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit and teaching of God's Word by Spirit-gifted human teachers.

➤ **1 John 2:22 – *"Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son."***

Since the days of the New Testament, Satan has planted these deceivers in Christian churches, where they prey on the untaught or the disgruntled. To avoid spiritual deception, you must develop biblical discernment and always be vigilant and discerning. But we live in a day when minimizing the whole idea of spiritual truth minimizes spiritual discernment. A popular slogan regarding this is:

"Doctrine divides. Let's set aside our doctrinal differences and come together on the areas where we agree."

Another popular mantra is:

“Jesus said that they will know that we are His disciples by our love, not by our doctrine.”

Let us not forget:

“It makes no difference what you believe, just as long as you are sincere!”

The implication is to set aside your doctrinal views and accept anyone who says that he believes in Jesus. Thus, viewing tolerance, unity, and love as much more important than doctrinal truth, often smacks of pride.

As the well-known aphorism states:

“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” ¹

Christians often attempt to reach consensus regarding their core theological and ethical convictions and how they will live them out in church and society. The quote is full of wise counsel, and yet it also begs two important questions: “What are the essentials? And who determines what they are?”

The first question we must ask of anyone who makes these statements is, “Who do you think Jesus Christ is?”

“By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.” (1 John 4:2-3)

Only after we receive an answer in agreement with biblical teaching can we then address any non-essential doctrinal differences.

- **1 John 2:23** – *“No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”*

This is the correct, though not complete, answer to the question above, “Who do you think Jesus Christ is?” John has just explained that the person who denies this exhibits an [antichrist](#) spirit because they deny **Jesus is the Christ** ([2 Peter 2:1](#)). To deny Jesus is the Son is to deny the Christian doctrine of God. The Christian doctrine of a personal, fatherly, God depends on the revelation of God given in Jesus.

After John wrote this epistle, John's disciple [Polycarp](#), then bishop of the church in [Smyrna](#), sent a letter to the Christians in Philippi and said:

“For everyone who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is an anti-Christ; and whosoever does not confess the testimony of the Cross is of the devil: and whosoever perverts the oracles of the Lord for his own lusts, and says that there is neither resurrection nor judgment – this man is the firstborn of Satan.”

- **1 John 2:24** – *“Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.”*

Having distinguished between the false teachers and the true believers, and having exposed the nature and consequences of the heresy, John now draws attention to the two safeguards that will protect his readers from being led astray. To guard against error, two things must ‘**remain**’ in them:

First, **the message** which “you have heard from the beginning” ([1John 2:24](#)).

¹ *In Essentials, Unity*. Walter Fenton, Wesley Covenant Association. 11 June 2021.
<https://wesleyancovenant.org/2021/06/10/7680-2/>

Second, *'the **anointing** you received from him'* ([1 John 2:27](#))."

We will address the first of these here and the second one when we get to verse 27.

John says, *"Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you."* This means more than simply reading your Bible occasionally. This also means more than just reading it in a rather cursory way and then shutting the book and marking off on your list that you've done your Bible reading for today. The word *abide*, literally, means "to remain in you." Or perhaps the closer word would be, "to possess you."

Considering the danger of the spirit of the antichrist, we must protect ourselves against the antichrist by abiding in the original, core Christian message, which *"you heard from the beginning."*

The apostle Paul communicated the same idea in [Galatians 1:6-9](#), where he warns against going after a new gospel and emphasizes the importance of continuing on in the original gospel that Paul taught.

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed." ([Galatians 1:6-9](#))

The truth of the Gospel exists as a living reality, independent of us. But it needs to be permanently living in our minds and our wills. Believers are actively commanded to persevere in the truth because it is the gracious means by which they are sanctified. ([1 Corinthians 15:1-2](#), [Philippians 2:12-13](#), [Colossians 1:21-23](#))

➤ **1 John 2:25** – *"And this is the promise that he made to us – eternal life."*

With this declaration, John connects the experience of eternal life to our relationship with God. The presence of Jesus Christ and the Father defeats the power of sin and death. The believer moves from the darkness into the light and now possesses eternal life. This defeat of sin and death on the cross and resurrection also secures a future eternal dwelling place with the Father and the Son in the kingdom of God.

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." ([John 3:36](#))

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." ([Romans 6:23](#))

➤ **1 John 2:26** – *"I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you."*

Beginning in the first century, the enemy began sowing seeds of lies and confusion about the truth of the Gospel. And we in the modern church must remain vigilant, because this reality has not changed!

It is frightening the ease with which many people are deceived. Two things account for this ease of deception: a lack of grounding in the Word of God and a lack of life in the Holy Spirit. Or to put it another way, when people have no theological depth and no vital experience of the Holy Spirit, they are sitting ducks for the deceiver and the antichrist.

The two things John strives for are a deeper rooting in the Word of God and a deeper experience of the Spirit of God. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are our only hope for stability in a world filled with antichrists.

- **1 John 2:27** – *“But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie – just as it has taught you, abide in him.”*

Having just told them, “The **anointing** you received from him” (the Holy One), John reminds them of the resource God has given them to enable them to contend earnestly for the faith. They have received all that is necessary for self-defense if they use the power (the armor of God) given to them. ([Ephesians 6:10-18](#))

Understanding or discerning spiritual things only comes through illumination by the Holy Scriptures. No man can understand God’s divine, infallible revelation except through the revelation by the Holy Spirit) ([John 16:13](#)). Paul prayed that the “*eyes of your hearts*” might be enlightened ([Ephesians 1:18](#)). The Bible, in its original text, is the inspired, infallible Word of God. Inspiration therefore describes the work of the Spirit in the authors of the Scriptures and the Scriptures themselves.

1 John Commentary – Precept Austin

https://www.preceptaustin.org/1john_218-23_commentary#2:18

https://www.preceptaustin.org/1john_224_commentary

https://www.preceptaustin.org/1john_225-27_commentary#2:25

| COMPARISON OF THOUGHT AND STYLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE | | |
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| First Epistle of John – Chapter 2 | | Gospel of John |
| 1 John 2:6, 28 | Abiding in Jesus | John 15:4, 7 |

United Methodist Leaders Who Deny Christ.

DC Methodists Host Resurrection-Denying Seminar on Historical Jesus (2014)

<https://juicyecumenism.com/2014/04/10/dc-methodists-host-resurrection-denying-seminar-on-historical-jesus/>

Karen Oliveto’s Theology of Criticizing Jesus, Defending Demon Possession (2016)

<https://juicyecumenism.com/2016/07/16/karen-oliveto-theology-criticizing-jesus-defending-demon-possession/>

Methodist Bishops & False Doctrine (2017)

<https://juicyecumenism.com/2017/05/19/methodist-bishops-false-doctrine/>

United Methodist Seminaries Promote Unitarian Universalism (2022)

<https://juicyecumenism.com/2022/07/12/united-methodist-seminaries-promote-unitarian-universalism/>

Disdaining the Crucifixion? (2023)

<https://juicyecumenism.com/2023/04/06/disdaining-the-crucifixion/>