

1John 2:18-27 (READ)

We live in a society that no longer believes in absolute truth  
How many of have ever heard the phrase – that may be true for you, but..  
Maybe you've even used it  
Our society believes that we all find our own truth  
And what may be true today doesn't necessarily have to be true tomorrow  
The problem we run into is this - if there is no right – then there is no wrong  
We have lost our moral bearing  
Not having absolute truth means what is right and what is wrong can trade places  
And do it so quickly and so subtly that nobody notices  
As a result we live with a sense of uncertainty and lostness  
Psalm 11– If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?  
Never has that verse seemed so relevant as it does today  
For the foundations of our faith and this country are under attack  
Now to men and women who believe in relative truth  
Christians seem outdated – even a bit old fashioned – intolerant  
For when the Bible speaks of truth, it means truth - absolutely  
This truth is for everyone and it is true now and forevermore  
It never changes to meet the demands of modern culture  
And it isn't hidden – you don't have to wonder where to find it  
Biblical truth can be known by taking God at His Word  
As it is recorded in the Bible and by acting upon it  
The world says there is no such thing as absolute truth  
John writes that knowing truth is the most significant thing that can happen  
For knowing truth is an evidence of being born again  
One of John's purposes in writing this Letter - perhaps the main one  
Is to help Christians know they are Christians  
To do this he offers three tests  
We have already looked at the first two  
They are the moral test – the test of increasing righteousness  
And the social test – the test of love  
Now John gives us his third test – the test of truth  
Can you truly know you are saved

John writes that you can be certain that you are born again  
Based on your attitude toward truth as revealed in Jesus Christ  
If you believe Jesus to be God incarnate  
And have received Him as Savior you are born again  
In our passage today  
John develops a contrast between antichrists and God's children  
He defines the heresy of the antichrists  
Then he encourages believers to use their defenses against heresy

The contrast between antichrists and God's children  
Let's start with the antichrists  
In verse 17 John mentions that this world is passing away  
And we are in the last hour  
The last hour means the finality of Satan's reign on earth  
Satan's time is almost over  
The last hour began at the cross and will end with Jesus return  
And as Satan's time draws to a close  
He will fight even harder to destroy the church  
John writes that Satan will send false teachers to corrupt the church  
In his time it was the Gnostics  
He calls them antichrists and contrasts them with God's true children  
You know of course that we still have their legacy with us  
I turned on the History channel the other day to see the true Jesus  
And of course - they were quoting from the Gnostic gospels  
Now the word antichrist occurs 5 times in Scripture and only John uses it  
But though the title is used infrequently the person is in other Books  
The antichrist is part of the teaching that at the end of history  
There will be a great struggle between good – God's forces  
And evil - led by Satan  
This struggle will be focused on a human being of superior intelligence  
John in the Book of Revelation calls him the "beast"  
Paul calls the final antichrist the "man of lawlessness"  
For he opposes and exalts himself over everything that is worshipped and even sets himself up in the temple proclaiming himself to be God  
Jesus said this about His church

Mark 13 – False Christs and false Messiahs will appear will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray

A great battle is coming at end of the age when antichrist meets the Christ

But before the final antichrist comes there will be antichrists

John says – they went out from us but they were not part of us

These antichrists will come from within the church but not be part of it

And when they leave they will show themselves as false believers

I believe the parable in Luke 13

About the mustard tree with birds nesting in its branches

Is about false believers sitting comfortably in the real church

The most effective opposition to true belief does not come from outside but from within the church

By those pretending to be Christians

Now when John wrote that many antichrists have come

He was not stating that the final antichrist had arrived

But rather the spirit that will characterize the final antichrist

Is already working in those who preach heresy

Antichrists are Satan's representatives

Sent to destroy the church that Christ is building

And so it has been through the ages

The founder of the Mormon church got his doctrine from an angel

The founder of scientology was a science fiction writer

Sun Myung Moon has stated that he is the Christ

Returned to fulfill Jesus unfinished mission

Perhaps the most notorious latter day antichrist was Jim Jones

Who, when he was faced with defection, murdered all of his followers

But there are many more

These are talented charismatic phonies sent by Satan

To draw away from the true church and trip up true believers

Now the word translated antichrist could mean “against Christ”

Or it could mean “false Christ”

I believe John chose the word he did because of its double meaning

All antichrists are false Christs - and all antichrists are against Christ

Their knowledge their purpose their charisma comes straight from the pit

John writes of those who joined this new fashionable heresy

They went out from us in order to show that they were not of us  
In other words the defection of false believers  
Actually has the effect of purifying the church  
They fail Paul's test and it is good for the church that they do  
2Cor 13 – Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!  
Certainly the implication is that if you have the Spirit of Christ in you  
You will continue in the faith  
There will be ups and downs but you will always return to truth  
Remember if you are saved you have the Spirit in residence within you  
If you do not have the Spirit you are not saved  
And if you do not have the Spirit you will chase after new better forms of religion  
Or you will grow tired of the Gospel and drift away -  
Or you will be like Demas and return to the world that you love  
And this will be done to your own destruction  
John is drawing our attention to the obvious truth that  
There is a difference between the visible and the invisible church  
The visible church are those who claim to be Christians  
The invisible church are those who are truly born from above  
Christians should pray for the church that it will be as pure as it can be  
But the church will never be completely filled with only true Christians  
There will always be tares in the pews as well as wheat  
That is what Jesus said would happen – and it has happened  
It happened in the early church and it continues to occur  
Some of those phonies even become teachers or pastors  
That's one of the reasons Paul told us to examine every word spoken  
1Thes 5 – Examine everything carefully; hold fast to what is good  
Now on the other hand it is not our job to go searching through the church  
Looking for false believers  
Remember in Jesus parable of the wheat and the tares  
Jesus servants asked Him if they should pull the tares out and destroy them  
And He said No – leave them alone lest you pull up some of the wheat. They will be taken care of at  
harvest time  
The truth is - some Christians are so much like non-Christians  
And some non-Christians are so much like Christians

That it will be impossible to tell the difference between them in this life

So although we are to weigh what is said

We are not to make assumptions about salvation

When I was a new Christian I led some Bible studies

And once in a while someone quotes me from those early studies

And when they do I get kind of nervous because I know a whole lot more about the Bible today than I did back then

My point is this

No matter what I said then and how off-track it might have been

I was still saved - I wasn't a false teacher – I was an ignorant one

So judge the words of the speaker but don't judge his or her salvation

For Jesus would rather tolerate unbelievers in His church

Than injure one of His children

Now if they deny the person of Jesus – then it's time for them to go

Those who leave Christianity for good - not just changing churches

But a genuine departure from the fundamental truths of the faith

They show they never were part of the church to begin with

Set against the antichrists who have left the church are God's true children

All God's children have been anointed

Now if it was translated literally verse 20 would read

But you have been Christed from the Holy One

You see the word translated anointed is translated elsewhere as Christ

Jesus is the "Anointed One" or the "Christ" - which in Hebrew is "Messiah"

His name is Jesus – His title is Christ – the Anointed One

Now this is important

To say that all believers are anointed

Is equivalent to saying that we are all now Christs in this world

That is a scary and at the same time wonderful concept

Wonderful because of the marvelous kindness of God

Scary because of the implied responsibility it carries

All who are in Christ have been anointed by God

And are as Christ and represent Christ in this world

Remember when Jesus walked on earth He was the light of the world

Then he callus the light of the world

We are His relation - His new creation - showing forth His life

Later in Chapter 4, John writes – In this world we are like Him

Then all God’s children know the truth concerning Jesus

Paul wrote – I am not ashamed of the Gospel (or the Good News) for it is the power of God for salvation

The Gospel – the Good News – the truth that all believers know

Is Jesus Christ

The pivotal truth of the Christian faith is the Person of Jesus

Who do you say Jesus is

Christians know the full absolute reliable truth about Jesus

Whatever doubts we might have, we have no doubts about Him

The chief difference between antichrists and Christians is Jesus

So the chief heresy of the antichrists shouldn’t surprise us

The fundamental error of the antichrists is their denial

That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God

This is not just the error of the Gnostics

I have not studied them but I believe the person of Jesus

Is the fundamental error of all cults

It is certainly the error of all John would call antichrists

John calls it “the lie”

The lie is satanic and comes straight from the pit

So John flat out states

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father. The one who confesses the Son has the Father also

The belief John is writing about is the knowledge

That God became man in Jesus as the Christ

To confess that Jesus is the Christ is to believe in the Christ of the Scriptures

I saw a PBS documentary the other day

The topic was – Who is Jesus? – of course they had their “experts”

This “expert” said – It would be tragic if the Gospels were written literally and we took them figuratively, or if they were written figuratively and we took them literally.

And of course he finished with – I believe the authors meant them figuratively, and we are taking them literally

John would call that so-called expert an antichrist

The Jesus of Scripture is the Jesus of our faith  
And it must be that way if our faith is to have any relevance to salvation  
For if you deny the truth of Jesus you don't have Jesus  
If you don't have Jesus you don't have the Father  
And you will die in your sins  
It's that simple – it's that awful

John finishes this section by letting believer know  
What defenses we have against heresy (READ 24-27)  
Twice John has identified the denial of Jesus by false teachers  
As the work of a demonic influence upon the congregation  
How can we be safe against such a powerful adversary  
John writes that we have two main defensive weapons  
Both of which have been given to us by God  
Our first defense against heresy is the Word of God  
John means the entire counsel of God  
The word of God is to be our measuring stick for truth  
Everything said about men and God  
And in particular Jesus must be weighed against the truth of the Word  
We are to let the Word abide in us  
That is definitely more than slight familiarity  
It means we need to get into it every day – meditate on it  
And obey its commands  
Then as God's Word abides in us  
The Holy Spirit will use it to guide us and keep us from error  
As Joshua took charge of the nation of Israel God gave Him instructions  
Get up – cross the river – be strong and courageous  
Then God gave Joshua encouragement – He said - I will give you this land  
Finally God gave Joshua some conditions for success  
Do not let the Book of the Law depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so  
that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way  
prosperous and then you will have success  
As I mentioned at the beginning of this message – truth doesn't change  
If you want to live right before God you must get into the Book  
Without the Word of God abiding in you, you will be fair game

For every offbeat theological drivel that comes through your ear  
With the Word of God comes discernment  
Paul in his final Letter to Timothy  
From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation.

To successfully live the Christian life you must be in the Word  
Our second defense against heresy is the Holy Spirit  
As important as it may be  
The Bible by itself is not enough to keep people in the truth  
The Gnostics had heard the same truths as true Christians  
But when they got this new unbiblical teaching they left  
There are liberal scholars who know this Bible better than you do  
But they don't believe a word of it  
More or less - every cult has the same Bible as we do  
Yet they are still led astray  
Why can't they see the truth of Scripture and get on the right path  
It's because we have something they don't  
All believers have the Holy Spirit  
That is the anointing John mentions  
When Herbert Armstrong the founder of the Worldwide Church of God died  
His elder board met to decide the future of the church  
They prayed and they read the Bible  
All of them came to the same conclusion  
Herbert Armstrong had been preaching heresy  
At great personal cost and with the loss of members and revenue  
They changed the doctrine of the church to coincide with the Bible  
How could they all come to the same conclusion  
Because the Holy Spirit guides us into truth  
He leads us into right thinking and right living  
False teachers do not have the Holy Spirit  
And they believe the lie because the lie appeals to their sinful nature  
When believers follow a person and not the Bible they can be misled  
But when that deceived believer  
By prayer asks God for help and gets into the Word of God

He has begun to break the power of the lie  
How many here have been reading your Bible and thought  
That is just for me – it's like that verse was written just for me  
That is the Holy Spirit – guiding you into the verse  
Then guiding the verse into your heart  
The serious believer is not reliant upon the pastor or teachers to know truth  
It is the Holy Spirit who interprets the Word of God and applies it to the life of a believer  
Prayer and the Holy Spirit are what every believer needs to understand the Word of God  
And to stay stable in the truth  
When the children of God are confronted by false teaching  
We have within us the means of rightly dividing the Word of God  
And coming to the truth  
I want to close by asking a couple of questions  
Do you have Jesus – not some sentimental picture of Jesus  
But Jesus Christ - Son of God in all His glory and all of His saving power  
If you have Jesus then you have the Father  
If you don't have Jesus – then you don't have the Father  
And you will die in your sins  
The way you can be certain you have Jesus is by how you answer the 2d question  
How did you do on the three tests  
The test of increasing righteousness – are you more like Jesus today than you were last year or three  
years ago – or last week  
The test of love – who is first in your life – is it you or is it Jesus  
Then who is second  
Are you a servant of others or are you expecting others to serve you  
Speaking of Himself Jesus said – You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free  
Have you been set free – free from the penalty of sin  
Free from the power of sin  
Free to be the person God created you to be – without the inhibiting factor of guilt  
Today you may be here so that you may know by experience who Jesus is  
Don't let this opportunity pass you be