



# Finer Grounds Bible Study

## 1, 2, & 3 John Lesson 6: 1 John 2:18-27

### Read 1 John 2:18-19

In this next portion of the text, John dedicates some time to warning the Christians about the danger of false teachers in the church (v.18-19). There are going to be those that oppose Christ in this “last time”, meaning this period of time—the Christian dispensation (or age).

There is a lot of confusion surrounding this text and those like it, that talk about “antichrists”—but there wouldn’t be so much confusion if people let the text speak for itself:

1. The definition of “antichrist” is simply one against Christ; an opponent of the Messiah. This isn’t some mystical apocalyptic term—they are clearly identified: an antichrist is simply anyone who goes against the teachings of Christ (1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 1:7). The word literally means “against Christ”.
2. We see that those who oppose Christ were already at work at the time of John’s writing and were going to continue to come (v.18).
3. Notice that there isn’t just one “Antichrist”. John says, “so now many antichrists have come”.
4. John identifies these people as those who were once disciples and followers of Christ, but had turned aside (v.19).

Let’s consider what John has said here when he says they “were not of us” – does he mean that

these people were never a part of the church? Perhaps. Sometimes it’s not obvious to us that Christians aren’t really following Christ (1 Timothy 5:24, 25) and it is possible for us to extend fellowship to those God never does (Matthew 13:47-48). People can be brought into the church prematurely or for the wrong reason—or those saved can fall away from the church without ever leaving church, and we wouldn’t know (Galatians 4:9).

The sad fact of the matter is that for these Christians, persecution is coming more from the inside than the outside. John is warning these threats will come from inside the church. I often say (and I think it to be absolutely true) that the greatest challenges to our faith often come from those we consider to be brothers and sisters. It’s often easier to detect wrong when it comes from a completely non-Christian source—we know those in the world are sinful and wayward, but our brothers and sisters are supposed to be on our side. It can be easy to confuse man with message and message with man. We must always be evaluate what we hear—even from our brethren. “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24).

**How can we be on guard against these potentially damaging influences?**

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**How can we make sure we are judging righteous judgment? Give an explanation of what righteous judgment is.**

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**How can we make sure that we don't fall into the trap of teaching falsely ourselves (consider 1 John 2:1-6, 15-17)?**

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### Read 1 John 2:20-23

In these verses, John points out that some are going to lie about Jesus and His identity (vv.20-23) While these false teachers are liars, He says that he writes to them not because he needs to tell them the truth—they already have that—but to remind them that they have the truth and that they need to compare what they already know with the lies they are hearing right now. On examining what they already know to be true they can combat these lies, because “no lie is of the truth”. This reminds me of something I once heard in a sermon, about counterfeit money and those whose job it is to detect counterfeits. He said that these people don't spend great lengths of time examining the counterfeits—rather they spend all their time examining the real thing, allowing them to recognize an imposter when they see it. It is the same way with us—we must spend the majority of our time in His Word, rather than in the things of man. It is only by knowing the truth better that we will be able to know a lie when we see it.

This “anointing” that he talks about comes from the same Greek word from which we get our English word “charismatic” and shares a root with the word “Christ”. This “unction” is a special endowment or anointing. The word is only used by John, here and in verse 27.

What is this unction? It is likely referring to spiritual gifts that allowed them to have all the knowledge they needed, as the revealed word was not complete at this time (see 1 Corinthians 12:7-10; 13:9, 10). Now that we have all we need through the Word, this “unction” is not needed (2 Timothy 3:16, 17), but it still stresses to us the importance of knowing the truth and being able to discern the truth from the lies—because if we know the truth, we'll know when a lie comes along.

Note that John tells them that he doesn't have to remind them of the truth—but he does remind them that no lie has partnership with the truth. Lies are the work of those “against Christ”. Our tendency is often to try and make harmony where there is none and simply “go along” (Exodus 23:2). We must know the truth—and be ready to fight for it.

Notice 4 avenues of denial (vv.22-23):

- To deny that Jesus is – the historical, biblical Jesus
- To deny that Jesus is the Christ – to deny the lordship of Jesus
- To deny that Jesus is the Christ – to deny the historical, biblical Jesus is Lord
- To deny that Jesus is the Son – to deny the Deity of Christ



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Notice also that the antichrist denies the Father and the Son (v.23). The Son shows us the Father more perfectly. When we deny Jesus, we deny the Father—we cannot have one without the other.

**We may not enjoy spiritual gifts today, but we have the fully revealed Word. How should this make us treat the Word of God?**

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**Are there matters on which Christians can disagree? How can Christians know when disagreement becomes a fellowship issue?**

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**In what way(s) might people deny that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God” without actually denying those truths verbally?**

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**How can this text (v. 20-23) help us to defend the integrity (purity, honor) of the church?**

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**Read 1 John 2:24-27**

Next John warns his audience that some are going to attack the foundations of their faith (vv.24-27). John’s audience already knew the truth—and they needed to abide in that truth to stay in a relationship with the Father and the Son

(v.24). This was important, because they could only know Jesus by knowing the truth (1 John 2:3, 4).

While these Christians had been promised eternal life—these false teachers were going to try to lead them away from being able to lay hold of that promise (vv.25-26). This is why knowing the truth is so very important—because the destination of our eternal soul is at stake.

John assures them again that they know the truth, and therefore will know when they were hearing lies. He also tells them that this truth they know is reassurance that they were abiding in Christ (v.27). As long as they stayed in the truth they already knew, no one could lead them astray. We have seen earlier in 1 John that we can know we are in Christ by how we are keeping His commandments (1 John 2:3), and here is further confirmation—we can know His commandments, we can keep them, and we can know that we have eternal life in Christ Jesus. The same is true for us—as long as we abide in His Word, we have nothing to fear. No one can separate us from God, except ourselves (Romans 8:38, 39; Isaiah 59:1-2).

**How can we “abide” in the truth? What are some habits that would help you to abide in the truth?**

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**What should John's warning tell us about when we hear some new religious teaching we haven't heard before?**

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**How can we keep an open heart and mind and continue learning without being led astray?**

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**How can we make sure that we have a good foundation so that we know when we are being told something that is going to steal away our chance at eternal life?**

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