



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Third Test of One's Claims (1 John 2:18-27)

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Wednesday, April 3, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **NO EVENING STUDY FOR THIS WEEK**

TRUTH!!

Some people are searching for it. Some claim to have found it. Others state that truth is whatever is true to you. Still others say that what may be truth today may not be the truth tomorrow.

One may believe that truth is quite fluid. Another holds truth beliefs that are contrary to each other but he does not recognize that this cannot be so.

Colonel Jessup said "You can't handle the truth."

Pilate asked Jesus "What is truth?" without realizing that truth was standing in front of him (John 18:37-38).

The Apostle John wrote that a third test of one's claim to be right with God is whether or not he or she confesses the truth; the truth about Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

In his confrontation with the false teachers, the Apostle John has laid out a series of tests to see if one's life actually matches up with one's claim. The first test was a test of righteousness, of morals. A person cannot claim to "know Him" if they continue to live in a pattern of sin (2:3-6). If one truly knows God, he or she will live a life of obedience; carefully guarding and keeping God's principles and precepts as something very precious.

The second test is a social test; a test of love for one's fellow man. A person cannot claim to live in the light if they do not show an *agape* love toward those around him or her (2:7-11). This love is a distinct love which is seen in the giver's deliberate choice to care for the welfare of the recipient. A sign that a person is right with God is that he or she has a pattern of love toward others.

After giving a number of assurances to those who are truly followers of Jesus Christ, who are right with God because of Christ, John laid out one more test to apply to one's claims. This third test is one which John Boice calls "the Doctrinal Test."¹

1 John 2:18-27 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us. ²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. ²¹I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. ²²Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. ²³Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. ²⁶These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

John's third test is centered on the truth; the truth concerning Jesus Christ. The liars don't have it and are opposed to it. Those who confess it have the truth abiding in them and they truly abide in the Son and the Father.

THE CONTRAST

In the previous passage, John gave a strong admonition not to love the things of this world. He wrapped up the warning by stating that "the world is passing away, and also its lusts" (2:17a). He transitioned from this by bringing up "the last hour" and by making a reference to one who is typically tied to the things of the last days—the antichrist. And in mentioning the

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LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4TH FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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antichrist that the believers heard was coming, John is making a comparison/contrast between those who confess the truth and those who do not.

The term “antichrist”, only mentioned in this form by the Apostle John, is a combination of terms which could mean “the opposite of” or “instead of”. While only mentioned by John, the concept of a person of evil who will exert great influence in the last days is found throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament book of Daniel, he is seen as a king who destroys other kings and sets himself up against God (Daniel 7). Jesus warned His listeners about false christs and false prophets who will show great signs and miracles in an attempt to deceive God's people (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:22-23). The Apostle Paul mentioned this antichrist calling him “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

WE ARE CALLED TO BELIEVE THE “HISTORICAL JESUS”—THE JESUS REVEALED TO US BY EYEWITNESS TESTIMONIES AND BY THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO WRITE WHAT IS TRUE CONCERNING THE SON OF GOD.

This “antichrist” will one day come, but in the meantime, John wrote that many who are opposed to Christ are already here. These are people who live in the spirit of the “antichrist” who will set up a reign of terror in the last of days. John mentioned two things about them to set up the contrast between true children of God and those who are against Him.

First of all, these antichrists “went out from us” (2:19). John seems to have in mind, as the context would teach, that these “antichrists” are the false teacher that he has addressed since the beginning of this letter. At one point, they were a part of the church. They may have had leadership positions, and able to influence many; most definitely, they were able to outwardly fool others.

Eventually, though, they left. John does not go into the reason why they left—maybe they were exposed, maybe they could not keep up the deception, or maybe they could not “handle the truth.” Whatever the reason, John said they left because they were really not part of the body, the church.

In today's time, this would not be those who moved from one church or denomination to another. Rather, these would be those who left and disavowed what they claimed to have formally believed. Pastors and churches cannot read the hearts of people as they join a fellowship. So they enter in for many different reasons which have nothing to do with a true faith and belief in Jesus Christ.

Secondly, these “antichrists” held false views concerning Jesus Christ and God the Father. John called them liars for they denied that Jesus is the Christ. They set themselves up against Jesus by refusing to believe the truth about Him. This truth was addressed earlier by John in his opening statement about “what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life” (1 John 1:1). More about these false views will be discussed in the next section.

In contrast to these “antichrists” are the true children of God. While they are remaining, there are two characteristics in contrast to the others, as found in 2:20: they have an anointing and they know the truth about Christ (both of these characteristics will be discussed further in the study).

THE DEFINITION

So what is the “doctrinal test”; the third test of one's claim to be right with God?

John makes it quite clear. He told his readers that he did not write to inform them of the truth; they already possessed it. And the truth, naturally, has no lie to be found in it. So who is the liar? Who does not have the truth and thus hold the lies? John said, “the one who denies that Jesus is Christ” Who is the antichrist? “The one who denies the Father and the Son” (2:22). And John continued: “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also” (2:23).

John's rebuke is strong. To confess that “Jesus is the Christ” is not simply an acknowledgement of His messiahship which was prophesied throughout the Old Testament—even though it does involve this. It is the belief that Jesus is truly God Incarnate; God in the flesh. One is called to believe that Jesus is who He said and proved that He is. John MacArthur writes:

...those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ do not know God (cf. Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:16; John 5:23; 15:23-24; 2 John 9)”. Any denial, deviation, or distortion of the scriptural view of

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Jesus Christ—His incarnation (Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:14); that He is both Son of God (Mark 1:1) and Son of Man (John 9:35-37); the promised Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15,18), Priest (Hebrews 4:14-5:10), King (Isaiah 9:7; John 12:12-15), and Redeemer (1 Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 3:13; 4:4-5; cf. Isaiah 59:20)—constitutes the spirit of antichrist.²

We, as people, are not at liberty to believe what we want about Jesus and still expect to be forgiven. We are not allowed to cut and paste a Jesus that we think we can love and still find grace. This undermines today's conclusions concerning Christ like those from the Jesus Seminar movement who seek to peel back the "embellishments" so they can find the "historical Jesus". Just like the Gnostics in John's day, false teachers abound today with numerous Jesus' who have been created in our likeness. We are called to believe the "historical Jesus"—the Jesus revealed to us by eyewitness testimonies and by those who have been moved by the Holy Spirit to write what is true concerning the Son of God.

If one denies that Jesus is the Christ, he or she is also denying that they know and have God. People forfeit the presence of God in their lives if they deny the Christ. They are also still in their sins and unredeemed; still standing before God as condemned.

One may claim to know God, while denying the truth about Jesus. But that is impossible. Just like the first two tests of morality and love, one's claim must pass the truth test or the claim is to be considered empty and false.

THE DEFENSE

John warns his readers about those who are trying to deceive them. As false teachers have entered the church, how is one to protect oneself from their deceptive words? John gave two defensive weapons. The first is the Word of God.

In verse 24, John wrote for his beloved children to "let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning." This word is the testimony and teaching of the Apostles which revealed the nature and work of Jesus Christ. It is this message that they believed and embraced. In its broader sense, it is the entire teaching of the Word of God.

The admonition is to continue to live in this message. Those who have been redeemed by God are to grow in knowledge of His Word through study, meditation and submission to its instruction. The better one knows,

understands and lives the Word of God, the better that person is able to detect the false teachings.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

When a follower of Jesus Christ does not utilize the defense of God's Word in their life, they are open to the myriad of deceptions that can be found in today's world.

The second line of defense is the Holy Spirit. While the Spirit's name is not referenced in this passage, He is what John is describing in the statement "the anointing which you received from Him" (2:27; cf. 2:20). It is the Holy Spirit who gives insight and understanding to God's people as they read and study the Scriptures. The Spirit does not give extra-biblical or special knowledge, but rather illumines what is written in the Word of God.

When John stated that his readers had no need for human teachers in verse 27, he was not speaking contrary to what the Apostle Paul wrote when he explained *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ...*(Ephesians 4:11-12). In fact, if John truly meant that his readers did not need a literal human teacher, he would be contradicting his own purpose in his letter. In this, John "...only means that any valid and therefore useful teaching of the Lord's people must be done by those who are themselves among the Lord's people and that if Christians are confronted by the false teaching of unbelievers, they have within themselves the means of exploring the Scriptures and thus dividing truth from error. In knowing truth they can remain firm."³

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CONCLUSION

James M. Boice gives three lessons from this passage to those who are Christians.⁴ The first is that questions about truth matter. There is a tendency among some believers that minimizes doctrine and teaching truth only to replace it with rules, special experiences or the idea that we just need to love. While obedience and love are necessary, one must know what to obey and how to love. That only comes through a diligent study, growth in knowledge of and submission to the Word of God.

The second lesson is that believers have “a responsibility where truth is concerned.” Believers are called to remain or abide in the truth found in Scripture. Yes, the Word abides in God’s redeemed. The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer; and does Christ Himself. But the believer is called to remain in the truth and abide in Christ.

Thirdly, both the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are needed for victory over error in the life of the believer. “Without the Spirit, knowledge of the

Word become but a bitter orthodoxy. Without the Word, the experience of the Spirit can lead to the most unjustified and damaging of excesses.”⁵ Both of these extremes have been seen throughout history and continue to be seen today. Diligent study and prayerful dependence are necessary to properly understand and see through deceptive teachings and philosophies.

And the promise to those who abide in that which is from the beginning, who abide in the Father and the Son? It is eternal life (2:24-25). The life of a follower of Jesus Christ (the Jesus as revealed in Scripture) is a life that will never end and a life that mankind was originally created for in the very beginning of time.

To those of you who are not Christians, who are not followers of Jesus Christ, the application is quite clear. If you do not believe in the Jesus Christ as revealed in Scripture, you are against Him. Your only hope is in the One who came as God in the flesh and paid the sacrificial penalty for your sins.

Through Christ, God can truly forgive all your sins--are you interested?

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1979), 66.

² John MacArthur, *1-3 John* The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), 100.

³ Boice, 74.

⁴ Boice, 74-75.

⁵ Ibid.