Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Christians and Antichrists
Scripture: 1 John 2:18-27
Code: 2109

INTRODUCTION

First John 2:18-27 contrasts Christians with antichrists. Verse 18 says, "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, by which we know that it is the last time." That verse introduces a term that is very familiar to Christians: antichrists. This is the first time it appears in the Bible. The only writer to use the word is John, and then only in his epistles. It appears again in verse 22: "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." First John 4:3 says, "This is that spirit of antichrist, of which ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world." And 2 John 7 says, "This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

A. The Spirit of the Antichrist

When the Antichrist comes in the end times, he will try to be the Christ that men are looking for. Later he will turn against Christ. The spirit of Antichrist has always been in the world. It has manifested itself both in open opposition to Christ and in subtle attempts to replace Christ.

B. The History of the Antichrist

Mankind has always sensed there is a power in the universe opposed to God. Apart from the Bible's revelation of Satan, men know there is good and evil in the universe.

1. The Babylonian legend

One of the earliest written records of conflict between good and evil comes from Babylonian history. The Babylonians held to a creation legend. Supposedly the god Marduk subdued an evil sea monster named Tiamat. But Marduk did not kill Tiamat. The Babylonians taught that a final battle would occur in the end times when Tiamat would wake up and fight against Marduk. That legend gives credence to the human understanding that good and evil continue to co-exist and will engage in ultimate conflict. Of course we know Scripture prophesies a final battle between the two.

2. The Old Testament acknowledgment

The Old Testament acknowledges the existence of such legends by its use of similar imagery.

a) Isaiah 51:9--In referring to the arm of the Lord, Isaiah said God wounded a sea-monster (KJV, "dragon"). To make his point, Isaiah borrowed from the pagan understanding that a monster represented evil in the world.

b) Isaiah 27:1--"The Lord with his hard and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, even leviathan, that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the sea- monster that is in the sea." God will destroy evil. The concept of a serpent representing the evil force in the world came from the biblical record of Adam and Eve in the Garden, where Satan took on the form of a serpent (Gen. 3:1, cf. Rev. 12:9).

C. The Form of the Antichrist

There is an anti-God force in the world, and that force is Satan. Quite often that force has taken human form. There were times when Isaiah and Ezekiel were technically addressing kings, but went beyond them and addressed the devil working through them. The kings were simply manifestations of the spirit of Satan.

1. The forerunner

Around 168 [sc]B.C. a man by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes came to the fore of Jewish history. Epiphanes means "the great one." He gave himself that name. The Jews called him Antiochus Epimanes, which means "the madman." Antiochus was the king of Syria. He wanted to eliminate Judaism from the earth, so he invaded Jerusalem, killed thousands of Jews, and sold others into slavery. He instituted the death penalty for anyone who circumcised a child or owned a copy of the law. He erected an altar to Zeus in the courts of the Temple. He sacrificed a pig on the altar in defiance of Jewish law. He turned the Temple chambers into brothels. All were deliberate attempts to desecrate the Temple and God. Those actions provide an appropriate picture of the coming Antichrist. Some of Daniel's prophecies of Antiochus actually refer to the future Antichrist (e.g., Dan. 11:31).

2. The final form

The anti-God force in the world has taken on many forms throughout the centuries, but there will be one great and final form.

a) 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4--"Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day [the day of the Lord] shall not come, except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that

he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." The day of the Lord--the time of the final judgment when Christ returns--will not occur until the Antichrist is made known. He will oppose God and exalt himself. He will sit on God's throne, passing himself off as God.

b) Revelation 13:1-2, 5-7--John, in a vision, said, "I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion; and the dragon [Satan] gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.... There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was given to him to continue forty and two months [three and a half years--the second half of the tribulation]. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."

c) Revelation 16:13--"I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast." Those spirits represent Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet.

d) Revelation 19:20--"The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Here the beast and false prophet are cast into eternal hell. Revelation 20:10 tells us the devil will be cast in there with them.

D. The Principle of the Antichrist

The term Antichrist applies specifically to one man, but the term antichrists is much broader. It basically refers to a principle of evil that is hostile and opposed to God. That principle can be incarnated in men, and such men have existed in every generation. They have either been open and blatant opponents of God and Christ, or they have made subtle attempts to replace the truth of God with their own deception.

E. The Proliferation of the Antichrist

To John, antichrists is another word for false teachers. The Lord gave fair warning to the church about them. He said, "False Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect" (Mark 13:22). There will be a proliferation of antichrists in the last days--and that is true today. Jesus also said, "Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Mark 13:6). Paul warned the Ephesian elders, saying, "After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves

shall men arise, speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:29-30). There will be many deceivers, false teachers, and antichrists. Some of us aren't very aware of that because our knowledge of the true Christ insulates us from them.

By the time 1 John was written, there were many antichrists: "It is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, by which we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). Wherever there are Christians, there will be opposition to Christ.

E. The Exposure of the Antichrist

John warned the church about antichrists. The church cannot function unless those people are exposed. A church that puts its head in the sand and doesn't deal with those who deceive and teach false doctrine will be undermined--and John knew that. So he wrote to believers in Asia, saying, "You've got to unmask the antichrists. You can't let them remain in your fellowship." Sometimes the false Christ isn't in the form of a person; it's a false view of Christ.

Throughout his epistle, John gives tests for distinguishing between true and false believers. There are two basic tests: the doctrinal test and the moral test. You can identify a true Christian by his doctrine--he will confess sin and confess Christ--and by his life--he will love God and fellow believers, and he will obey the commands of God.

We see the first part of John's doctrinal test in 1 John 1:9: true believers confess their sins. The second part begins in 1 John 2:18. We learn the primary difference between antichrists and Christians is that Christians believe in the true Christ, while antichrists oppose Him or substitute a false Christ. The opposition is represented by the gnostic heresy that infiltrated the church in the first century. They taught that Jesus was not God in human flesh. Some thought He was only a man; others thought He was some kind of phantom. So John reaffirms that a true Christian confesses that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh. That is his emphasis in 1 John 2:18-27. There are only two people to consider in this passage: antichrists and Christians.

I. THE ANTICHRISTS (vv. 18-19, 22-23, 26)

A. The Introduction of the Antichrist (v. 18)

"Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, by which we know that it is the last time."

1. The victims of false doctrine

John used two different words for "little children." The Greek word he used in 1 John 2:12 and 28 is teknia; the one he used in verse 13 and here in verse 18 is paidia. What's the difference?

a) The different terms

Teknia means "offspring." It's a broad term that has nothing to do with age. However, paidia refers to an infant. The English word pedagogy comes from it, which means "to instruct someone who is unlearned." We can conclude that John is talking to spiritual babies in verse 18.

b) The deliberate warning

John is warning spiritual babies about false teachers because they are most susceptible to confusion. We know it is not possible for the elect to be ultimately deceived from following Christ (Matt. 24:24), but it is certainly possible for them to be confused. Why does John speak only to spiritual babies about false teachers? Because those who have matured into spiritual young men are no longer victimized by false doctrine. First John 2:14 says, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you." Ephesians 4:14 says the spiritually immature are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

2. The validation of Christ's presence

a) The period

The apostle John informs his little children that it's "the last time" (1 John 1:18). Commentators have various opinions about what that means. Some believe John was two thousand years off in his calculation. Others think he meant it was an important hour. But I believe every Christian born since then has been living in the last days. The Jews knew the Messiah would come in the last days, and they also knew there would be terrible opposition to Him. The fact there is opposition helps to verify that Jesus is the Messiah and that it is indeed the last time.

b) The presupposition

The word Christ means "anointed one." It was used to translates the Hebrew word Mashiach (Messiah) in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. If there is no Christ, there can't be an Antichrist. That there are antichrists in the world tells me the true Christ is here.

First John 2:18 says, "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come." Where did they hear that from? Probably from their teachers, the apostles. Second Thessalonians was written long before 1 John. It is likely that John's readers had either read or heard Paul's teaching in 2 Thessalonians 2:3- 12 about the coming man of sin, who would exalt himself above God, sit in the temple of God, and show himself to be God. But John adds, "Even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). Here he is

referring to all deceivers and subverters of apostolic teaching. Their widespread activity is an indicator that these are the last days.

That liberal churches and cults operate without any opposition while we struggle against false teachers and deceivers is evidence to me of who is right. One of the validations of Christianity is the continuing worldwide hatred of Christ and the multitudinous attempts to counterfeit Him.

B. The Identification of the Antichrists (vv. 19, 22-23, 26)

John gives three characteristics of antichrists.

1. They depart from the fellowship (v. 19)

"They [antichrists] 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; but they went out, that they might be made manifest they were not all of us."

a) Their origin

Antichrists originate in the church and then depart from it. The church doesn't suffer so much from attacks outside it as it does from those inside. John says antichrists left the church. Perhaps they failed to win over the leaders to their view. The churches remained unmovable because they were true to the Word. When the antichrists were unsuccessful, they bailed out. Notice John distinguishes clearly between those who left--antichrists--and those who remained--Christians.

b) Their defection

(1) Unmasking the character of the antichrists

The defection of the antichrists gives clear evidence of their true character. God had them leave to manifest that they were not believers. Luke 12:2 says, "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hidden, that shall not be known." God will unmask the deceivers.

(2) Revealing the perseverance of the saints

John says, "If they had been of us, they would ... have continued with us" (1 John 2:19). Mark 13:20 says, "Except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." If allowed to continue, the tribulation could destroy even the people who are to be saved during it. So God will shorten it to make sure the elect are secured. Verse 22 says, "False Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." There we see it isn't possible to seduce the

elect. Yet Satan will continue to work through false Christs to try to seduce them. God never allows anything to happen to the saints that would cause them to be lost. If someone departs the fellowship to follow false doctrine, you can be sure he was never saved. God uses his departure to manifest that fact.

Salvation is not the reward for endurance, but endurance is a mark of salvation. If the antichrists had been of us, they would have continued with us. The ultimate test of true Christianity is perseverance. True Christians remain in the fellowship.

c) Their manifestation

All will be made manifest. Some false teachers might not be manifest until the judgment, but many of them leave the fellowship, thus exposing themselves to the community of believers. People have asked me about someone they assumed to be a Christian, but who has now joined a cult or become an atheist. I simply tell them to read 1 John 2:19. I'm thankful to God that He sent them away so we might know the truth about them. Don't be disturbed--this knowledge isn't designed to make you doubt your security; it should give you absolute confidence because God manifests the false people to you.

(1) Jude 19--Jude says false teachers "are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." If they don't have the Spirit, are they Christians? No. They separate themselves because they are false from the beginning.

(2) 1 Corinthians 11:19--Paul said, "There must be also heresies among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you." Heretics reveal who is true by contrast. When they depart and you stay, you can know they weren't true. You may think they were true, but that's not a judgment God wants you to make. You can't distinguish the wheat from the tares--that's why only God and His angels can separate them at the judgment (Matt. 13:28-30). There will even be those who say, "Lord, Lord" (Matt. 7:22), but Christ will say, "I never knew you; depart from me" (v. 23). God wants the distinction clear, so He marks the phonies by their departure from the fellowship.

When you see someone who has come to church for a long time suddenly bail out in favor of some false doctrine, know that God is manifesting to us that he was false all the time. What's even more tragic is when the false believers become so comfortable in a church that eventually the true believers all leave. What remains is the typical liberal church of today--the entire fellowship is nothing but antichrists.

2. They deny the faith (vv. 22-23)

a) The denial of the Son (v. 22a)

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?"

Anyone who denies Christ is an antichrist. All lies are alien to the truth. John has in mind the great lie--that Jesus is not the One He claimed to be. Second Thessalonians 2:11 says that during the tribulation, "God shall send ... strong delusion, that they [unbelievers] should believe the lie." What is the lie? That Christ is not who He claimed to be. I don't care what people claim to believe. If they do not believe Jesus is God in human flesh, they are antichrists. That is John's doctrinal test--the acid test of a man's salvation.

(1) 1 John 4:2--"By this know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist ... and even now already is it in the world." Salvation is based on one's answer to this question: Is Jesus God in human flesh?

(2) 2 John 7--"Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh." Some Gnostics said He was just a phantom. The Cerinthian branch of the Gnostics said Jesus was just a man--that the Christ spirit came on Him and then left. Those are the lies John was combating in his epistles. Deceivers deny the incarnation and therefore the deity of Jesus Christ. Such denial is the basis of liberalism, modernism, and the cults of today.

Seminaries throughout our country teach that Jesus was an elevated man who had great wisdom and insight, but deny that He is God. However Jesus said, "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

b) The denial of the Father (vv. 22b-23)

"He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also."

Implicit in denying Christ is denying the Father. Some people say they believe in God in spite of not believing in Christ, but their God is not the God of the Bible because He is manifest in the Son. Anyone who denies the Son denies God. Whoever denies Christ's deity opposes the revelation that authenticates the credentials of the Messiah. To deny Jesus is to deny God. People who say they believe in God blaspheme His name by their failure to believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate.

3. They deceive the faithful (v. 26)

"These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you."

Antichrists try to seduce believers. We know it's impossible for them to ultimately deceive the elect, but they sure give it a good try. First Timothy 4:1 says their weapons are "seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons." Satan is busy trying to seduce Christians.

The apostle John jealously guarded the welfare of Christ's sheep. He said, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth" (2 John 4). He also said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). John was thrilled that the believer was secure in truth.

II. THE CHRISTIANS (vv. 20-21, 24 27)

A. Their Faithfulness (vv. 20-21, 25, 27)

John presents a picture of the Christian in contrast to the antichrists. Unbelievers depart from the fellowship, deny the faith, and try to deceive the faithful. They are unsuccessful in their deception for two reasons: Christians accept the faith and remain faithful.

1. They accept the faith (vv. 20-21, 27)

a) The anointing of the Spirit (v. 20)

"Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

(1) The words of the deceivers

Two words Gnostics commonly used to describe their religious experience were knowledge (Gk., gnosis) and anointing (or, unction). The Gnostics would say, "We have received a special anointing of God that has given us a superior knowledge." They claimed God lifted them to a higher level of understanding.

(2) The words of the believers

John says Christians have an anointing from God Himself and that they know all things (v. 20), thus contradicting the Gnostics. It's the Christians, not them, who have the anointing and the knowledge. The Lord has made a glorious provision for His own--He preserves them from embracing error. John had no fear that true saints would become apostate. When someone does leave the fellowship, it proves they never were saved. Now you might think a few of those who leave may be Christians. But that can't be because John says, "Ye have an [anointing] from the Holy One, and ye know all things. 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" (vv. 20-21). Saints will not depart the fellowship and become apostate because they have an anointing from the Holy One and know the truth.

(a) The role of the Spirit

The Greek word translated "unction" is chrisma. It is only used here and in verse 27 in all the New Testament. It literally means "ointment." The anointing the believer receives is clearly the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul said, "Now he who establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:21-22). The believer is granted the Spirit of God as if He were an ointment, or oil, placed on him. Acts 10:38 says God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit.

(b) The role of Christ

Who is the anointer? According to 1 John 2:20, it's "the Holy One." That's a reference to Christ (e.g., Luke 4:34; Acts 3:14). Christ anoints the believer with the Holy Spirit. Then the Spirit gives us the knowledge of all things.

The Christian's preservative against error is the indwelling Holy Spirit. You don't need to go somewhere to pray for an anointing--you already have one. You have received the Holy Spirit, and He preserves you from error.

b) The teaching of the Spirit (vv. 21, 27)

(1) The substance of the teaching (v. 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."

How do believers come to know the truth? Christ gives the Holy Spirit to them, and He becomes their resident truth- teacher. That means knowledge of all things pertaining to spiritual truth is available to the believer through the Holy Spirit. Before Christ left the disciples He said, "The Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26).

John is saying in verse 21 that the Holy Spirit teaches them the lies of the apostates have no part with the truth. Some may fall into heresy and apostasy, and that manifests they never were saved. True believers will never fall into apostasy because the Holy Spirit is the Christian's built-in lie detector.

(2) The effect of the teaching (v. 27)

"The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

Why does a Christian continue in Christ and not follow after false doctrine? Because of the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. God has so endowed the Christian with discernment that he ultimately will not be deceived by lies. He may become confused at times, but he will always abide in Christ. He won't decide in favor of false doctrine because he can't. Verse 27 speaks of "the anointing which ye have received of him." That statement is in the past tense--you received the Spirit when you were saved and he continues to abide in you (Rom. 8:9). The Spirit never leaves a Christian; true Christians never depart from the faith. If they ever did, the Holy Spirit would have failed in His ministry of teaching the truth.

Do We Need Human Teachers?

What did John mean when he said, "Ye need not that any man teach you"? Obviously it doesn't mean we shouldn't have a human teacher. The Lord has given teachers to the church. First Corinthians 12:28 refers to those who have the gift of teaching. John is not saying we don't need human teachers; he is saying we don't need human teaching. We are not to be dependent on human wisdom but on God's Word, whether it's taught by spirit-filled human teachers or the Spirit Himself as He works on our hearts. The thing we don't need is human teachers teaching human philosophy. We need Spirit-filled teachers.

Antichrists will deny the faith and try to deceive the faithful. But the true Christian has the anointing of the Holy Spirit to preserve him from error. He will never defect. He may get tossed around a little, but he will never leave because Christians accept the faith through the Holy Spirit.

2. They remain faithful (v. 24)

"Let that, therefore, abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father."

a) The effort

You need to consciously hold to the truth--to contend for the faith (Jude 3)--and the Holy Spirit will make sure you do. It is your responsibility to contend for the faith with all your being, and it is the Spirit's responsibility to keep holding on to you. I wouldn't need to preach a sermon or write a book if

all you had to do was let the Holy Spirit keep you from error. We must be involved. That dichotomy occurs in every aspect of the Christian life.

The three English words abide, remain, and continue are all translated from the same Greek word: men[ma]o, which refers to continued dwelling. John is saying if you continue in what you have heard, then what you have heard will continue in you. Our part is to continue abiding in God's Word; the Spirit's part is to keep us.

b) The exhortations

True Christians hold to the faith and tenaciously defend the truth.

(1) 1 Corinthians 15:1-2--"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and in which ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you."

(2) John 8:31--Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."

(3) Colossians 1:22-23--Paul said Christ will "present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in his sight, if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature that is under heaven."

(4) 2 Timothy 3:14--"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned."

The Word of God is clear: the Christian life is not automatic. It is true the Holy Spirit secures us and guarantees us against defection. But at the same time the Bible instructs us to fight for the faith and continue in the Word. The contrast is simple: true Christians hold to the faith; antichrists deny it.

B. Their Future (v. 25)

"This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."

That is the future of Christians. What is the end of antichrists? It's terrible--just read 2 Peter 2.

CONCLUSION

Christians have two safeguards against heresy: the Holy Spirit and God's Word. The Holy Spirit is doing His part. Your part is to be obedient to Scripture. In some cases true believers drift away from the fellowship for a little while, but they are drawn back. There may even be some believers who drift away and die before they come back. God may have had to discipline them--He alone knows whether

they're genuine or not. But the majority who depart from the fellowship were never believers to begin with. What about you? Are you a phony who will depart some day? Or are you a genuine Christian who has been secured by the Spirit and is continuing in the faith?

Focusing on the Facts

1. What will the Antichrist try to do during the end times?

2. Who is behind the anti-God force in the world?

3. Who was Antiochus Epiphanes? Whom does he picture?

4. Explain the difference between the terms Antichrist and antichrists.

5. Describe the warning Christ gave the church about antichrists.

6. What will happen to a church that doesn't deal with false teachers?

7. What are John's two tests for distinguishing between true and false believers? What will those tests manifest?

8. Explain the difference between the two Greek words John uses for children.

9. Who needs to be warned about false teaching?

10. What period does "the last time" refer to (1 John 2:18)?

11. What does the name Christ mean?

12. How can we know Christ is real by what is happening in the world today?

13. What three characteristics identify antichrists (1 John 2:19, 22-23, 26)?

14. What is the origin of antichrists?

15. What is the ultimate test of true Christianity? Why?

16. What do people manifest about themselves when they leave the fellowship of the church to follow false doctrine?

17. What is the great lie?

18. What is implied in the denial of Christ as God (1 John 2:22b-23)?

19. Why are antichrists unable to deceive believers?

20. What two words did the heretics of John's day use to describe their religious experience? How did John use those words to denounce them (1 John 2:20)?

21. What is the anointing that the believer receives? Who does the anointing?

22. In what sense can the Holy Spirit be considered as the believer's built-in lie detector?

23. Why do Christians need human teachers?

24. What responsibility does the Holy Spirit have regarding the Christian's faith? What is the believer's responsibility?

Pondering the Principles

1. In his first epistle the apostle John gives tests that distinguish the true from the false. There are basically two tests: doctrinal and moral. The doctrinal test tells us that a true Christian will confess sin and confess Christ as Lord. The moral test tells us that a true Christian will love God and his fellow believers, and he will obey the commands of God. To understand how John used those tests in the first part of his epistle, read 1 John 1:1--2:17. Record every verse that refers to one of the two tests. Next to each verse indicate which test is discussed and which specific aspect of the test is covered.

2. In 1 John 2:12-14 John shows us there are three levels of growth in the Christian life: children, young men, and fathers. What are the distinguishing characteristics between the three? At which level would you place yourself? If you consider yourself to be a spiritual child, what are you doing to further your knowledge of the truth? If you are not daily spending time in reading and studying God's Word, you won't ever reach the level of a young man. For those of you who consider yourselves to be young men or fathers, what are you doing to help the spiritually immature to grow into a greater knowledge of the truth? Seek out those who need your help and make a commitment to pour your life into them.

3. According to 1 John 2:20, 27, the Holy Spirit teaches us the truth, which in turn helps us to identify error. In what ways has the Holy Spirit taught you the difference between truth and error? Be specific. Thank God for His provision of the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry in you. Ask Him to continue to guide

you into the truth.

4. Although you have supernatural help in your resistance to false doctrine, you also are responsible to consciously fight for the truth (Jude 3). In what ways have you been contending for the faith? In what areas have you been depending on the Holy Spirit only? Take a closer look at those areas. What are some things you can do to be better equipped to resist false doctrine? (For example, if you don't know much about what certain cults teach, read some books on them.) Remember, the Holy Spirit will ultimately keep you from error, but you need to make the commitment to be ready to defend the faith.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).