

Part 4 – 1 John 2:12-17

I. Three Types of Christians – 1 John 2:12-14

A. Vss. 12, 13 – Here we see the term “little children” used to describe Christians.

1. “Little children” or “God’s children” is a term used in the New Testament as a kind way of teachers addressing their disciples – see Mk. 10:24; Jn. 13:33; Gal. 4:19. John uses it in this letter in 2:1; 2:12; 2:28; 3:7; 3:19.

2. Note that vs. 12 says their “sins have been forgiven.” The perfect tense of “forgiven” indicates an action that happened in the past with the results of that action continuing. When we become a child of God, we are forgiven and that forgiveness continues to the present day. Christ has paid for our sins. John identifies these “children” as Christians.

3. Salvation comes by no other name than that of Christ (Acts 4:12). That is the meaning of the phrase “for his name’s sake.” See 1 John 3:23 and 1 John 5:13 for use of the name or Person of Jesus Christ regarding salvation.

4. In 1 John 2:14 we read that the “children” “know the Father.” The idea here is that they had come to know God through Christ by experiencing salvation. Again the “perfect tense” is used, as it is throughout vss. 12-14 for various verbs. Thus their “knowing” the Father was an ongoing, continual process. They were growing in their faith.

B. Vss. 13-14 – We are introduced to the “mature” or “fathers.” This term probably deals with those who were spiritually mature, though it can also deal with ones who are older in age. Based on the context here, it most likely describes spiritual maturity.

1. Vs. 13 tells us that just as the “children”, these “mature” ones “know Christ, Who existed from the beginning.” Their knowledge had begun at salvation and was continuing.

2. The idea of “beginning” in these two verses can have one of two meanings:

A. It is used to describe the beginning of the earthly ministry of Christ when He gathered His disciples (Jn. 6:64).

B. It is used to describe God as eternal. See 1 John 1:1; John 1:1. Some suggest that in 1 John 2:13 this is the meaning.

3. Vs. 14 repeats the exact same phrases about the “mature” or “fathers” as is found in vs. 13. It really points to their maturing ongoing relationship with God in Christ.

C. Vss. 13-14 – Here we read of the “young men” or “young in the faith.” It is again difficult to decide whether John has physical or spiritual age (maturity) in mind.

1. The word for “young” or “young men” in its common use in the NT describes a man between the ages of 24-40, such as in Acts 7:58, where Saul is called a “young man.”

2. Most likely John has in mind a spiritual person (man or woman) who is actively growing in their faith.

3. Vs. 13 tells us that these “young men” had won their battle over the “evil one.” Again, the perfect tense of the verb is used in the phrase “have won your battle.” To “win” the battle or “overcome” means “to conquer, carry off the victory, come off victorious.” It is used this way in Rev. 3:21 and Rev. 6:2 as examples.

4. Christians are “victorious” because of the indwelling presence of God (1 John 4:4-5). The victory is because of Christ (Jn. 16:33; Rom. 8:31-39; Col. 2:15; 1 Jn. 3:8; 1 Jn. 5:4).

5. In vs. 14 we read that these “young” are “strong” because “God’s Word lives” in their heart. They are “strong” in the faith or “mighty” because they had fought the battles properly. They had used the Word of God. It is only God’s Word that is the weapon to be used in spiritual warfare – See Ps. 119:9-11; Jn. 15:3,7; Jn. 17:17; Eph. 6:17; 2 Tim. 2:15.

II. Another Test – Loving The World – 1 John 2:15-17

A. Vs. 15 – Here we are told to not love the world and all that it offers us.

1. John gives us a command that we are to “not love this world.” The word for “love” is the word “agape”, the idea of “preferring something or prizing something above other things, being unwilling to abandon or do without it.” We could even say that it has the idea of “setting our heart”, or “longing for” something. It is used of Demas’ love for the world noted in 2 Tim. 4:10.

2. The word “world” describes the system of our planet that opposes God. It is attitudes, it is material things. James 4:4 gives a similar warning and challenge. Matthew 6:24-34 tells us that we cannot love the world and love God at the same time. It is impossible to do.

3. If anyone is loving the world, John says they show that they do not have “the love of the Father” in them. The attitude of seeking things for self goes against the humble attitude required of a believer.

B. Vs. 16 – Here John defines the things of the world.

1. The “craving for physical pleasure” describes craving something that is forbidden. James 1:13-15 tells us that man is drawn away into sin because of his lust. We as believers are to put to death these lusts. That is the teaching of Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3. They are contrary to our new nature.

2. The “flesh” or “a craving for everything we see” as the NLT puts it describes the “sin principle” which we all still have. Paul mentions it in Romans 7:14-25 and tells us that nothing good dwells in it. Gal. 5:16-26 warns us that the flesh wars against the Spirit. For believers, the cravings of the flesh can pull our hearts away from God if we are not careful.

3. The “flesh” or “craving for everything we see” depicts those things that we see that excite us. Think of Eve in the garden. She looked at the tree as a point of her fall.

** James Boice calls it “keeping up with the Joneses” – things like status, finances, etc.

4. The “pride in our achievements and possessions” describes a person who is trusting in their own resources and power and violates God’s laws and other people. This type of person trusts in things on this earth (James 4:13-17), and likes to display their lifestyle to others. This person trusts in the things of this earth, not in God, to satisfy their needs.

5. The enemy’s plan has never changed. Note the temptation of Christ in Matt. 4:1-11,

A. Vs. 3 – “lust of the flesh.” The Lord was hungry, the enemy attacked that hunger.

B. Vss. 5-6 – “lust of the eyes.” Seen in the phrase “throw yourself off”, an attempt to get the Lord to misuse Scripture.

C. Vss. 8-9 – “pride of life.” The enemy offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world.

** Note that Christ responded to each attack with the Word of God – Mt. 4:4; Mt. 4:7; Mt. 4:10

C. Vss. 16-17 – Here we see why we are not to love the world.

1. 3 reasons are given why we should not love the world:

A. Vs. 15 – to love the world is to not love the Father. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world. It must be remembered that John is speaking of a deliberate lifestyle choice.

B. Vs. 16 – All that is in the world opposes the Father. The world system is not in line with what God wants for His followers.

C. Vs. 17 – The world is fading away, and only those who do the will of God abide forever.

Questions To Think On:

1. Why does John make such a strong statement about “not” loving the world? (**1 John 2:15-17**). How would we define the “world” in these verses?
2. What are some of the things that come to mind when we read of the “craving for physical pleasure”, “a craving for everything we see” and “pride in our achievements and possessions” mentioned in **1 John 2:15-17**? See **Genesis 3:5-9** to see this in action and **James 1:13-15** about who causes us to sin.
3. **1 John 2:17** tells us why we are not to love the world. What comes to mind when you read this verse regarding what we have just looked at? How is it a “stop sign” to keep us on track?

Part 5 – 1 John 2:18-27

I. Knowing False Teachers – 1 John 2:18-23

A. Vs. 18 – A warning is given in this verse dealing with the rise of false teachers, called “antichrists.”

1. Note again the affectionate word “Children” used by John. It can also describe the idea of one who need to be under instruction or guidance. John cares for those he is writing to and wants to give them some guidance, some insight.

2. The phrase “last hour” can have a few different meanings. It can describe “a limited portion of time”, “a season”, or “last in time”, or “last in place.”

3. It is used of both the Advent of Christ and of His Second Coming to earth, which is probably its meaning here. Note point #4 next regarding this.

4. We can know that is the “last hour” because of the antichrists in the world – See 1 Tim. 4:1-5; The Book of Jude; Mark 13:22-23 to name a few passages dealing with false teachers. See also Revelation 2 and 3 where the churches were dealing with false teachers. See 2 Timothy 3:1.

B. Vs. 19 – Here we learn about those who are false teachers or follow false teachers. Their relationship to God is made very clear in the text here.

1. They (the antichrists), who were within the church departed, they left the church. This is a mirror of Acts 20:28-30.

2. The phrase “they never really belonged with us” indicates that they were not true believers. The “pluperfect tense” of the word “stayed” in this verse, describes an action that took place at a specific point in the time past to the writer and what he is currently saying. In other words, if these individuals had been truly of the body of believers, they would have continued or stayed with them. They would not have bailed on other Christians.

3. They left. Why? In leaving, they proved that they did not belong to the church, the body of Christ. They thus showed that they were not and are not truly “of Christ.”

4. There is quite possibly a secondary understanding in the passage. True believers, having the Holy Spirit, to some, cannot get trapped in a cult or false religion. They look at all cultists as lost without Christ, part of the unsaved world.

C. Vs. 20 – Understanding “The Spirit” or “Anointing.” This verse teaches about an “anointing” that all believers have.

1. Most likely the reference here of “anointing” refers to the Holy Spirit, whom all believers receive the moment they are saved – 1 Cor. 12:13; Jn. 14:16-17,26; Jn. 15:26; Jn. 16:7-15.

2. The “Holy One” in vs. 20, found in several translations, is an obvious reference to Christ. He is the called the “Holy One” in the New Testament – Mk. 1:24; Acts 3:14; Acts 13:35.

3. Christ is involved in the sending of the Holy Spirit – Jn. 14:26.

4. There are results to having this “anointing.” We know the truth. This does not mean that we do not need people to teach us the Word. It means that we know the truth about Who Christ is. Pastors and teachers are part of the ministry of the church. We all learn from others. This is fulfilling the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20). In fact, this meaning, that we know the truth concerning Christ, is the way some translations put vs. 20 – see “The New English Bible”, “New International Version.

5. Some believe the “anointing” refers to the church leaders. Though all believers have the Holy Spirit, the leaders were commanded to protect the flock (Acts 20:28-31). In the OT “anointing” referred to the leaders such as Priest, Kings, and Prophets.

D. Vs. 21 – Here we read that John believes that his readers know the truth.

1. The truth would be the doctrine of Christ, His Person and work.

E. Vs. 22 – Here is the determining factor of who is an antichrist, or as the ESV has it, “liar.” It is not just limited to false teachers.

1. The “liars” are ones who deny that Jesus is the Christ. Christ means “anointed”, and is the same as “Messiah.” They deny the Deity of Jesus Christ, His Incarnation and His return to earth. The facts of Who Christ is can be found in 1 Jn. 4:2; 2 Jn. 7-11; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4.

2. The Deity of Christ (Jesus is God) is taught throughout the New Testament – Jn. 5:16-23; Jn. 8:56-59; Jn. 10:28-29. The Jews vehemently denied that Jesus was God.

3. Jesus was the “Christ”, the “sent One” of God – Acts 5:42; Jn. 17:3.

4. Jesus was also called “Christ” as His name – Jn. 4:29; Acts 2:36.

5. An “antichrist” also denies the mission of Christ. The phrase “Father and the Son” reminds us that Christ came to do the Father’s will. You cannot accept one without accepting the other – Jn. 4:34; Jn. 4:42; Jn. 5:19-23; Jn. 5:26-27,31-38; Jn. 20:31.

** You cannot be a Christian and deny the Deity of Jesus Christ.

II. A Defense Against False Teaching – 1 John 2:24-27

A. Vs. 24 – Here is the challenge to us that we remain faithful to what we were taught and that we continue in fellowship with the Father and the Son.

1. What is to “remain” or “abide” with us? It is what we have been told about Christ – 1 Jn. 1:1-4. It was the message of Christ which had been given to them and to us.

2. If the truth is indeed in us, it will continue to be in us.

3. A relationship with Christ is our defense against false teaching.

B. Vs. 25 – Here is what we have if we continue in fellowship.

1. The promise is eternal life, which all true believers receive at the point of salvation.

C. Vs. 26 – Here is one of the reasons John has written to us.

1. He has warned us about false teachers. That is why he has given tests of salvation in his letter.

2. He does not want us to be deceived, or to be led into error – See also Mt. 24:4; Jn. 7:12; 2 Tim. 3:13.

3. This deception was a real problem because false teachers would claim divine knowledge and understanding of the Word of God.

D. Vs. 27 – Here John once again reminds us of our special relationship with Christ and the Holy Spirit.

1. The “anointing” or “receiving of the Holy Spirit” is for all believers. He “lives” in us right now.

2. The reference “that you don’t need anyone to teach you” does not deal with pastors or teachers as previously mentioned. In the context, it deals with those teaching things contrary to sound doctrine.

3. All false religions teach that they alone are the channel to Biblical truth.

4. When we yield to the Holy Spirit, and study the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15), then the Lord can teach us truth and we will not be led astray.

Questions To Think On:

4. What do you think John means when he talks of those who have left the church in **1 John 2:18-19**? When you hear the word “antichrist” what comes to mind?

5. Look at **1 John 2:21-23**. What are the marks of an “antichrist”? Why is it so important for us to keep our beliefs straight?

6. What is the “anointing” in **1 John 2:20, 27**? How does the Holy Spirit help keep us from being led into error?