

Introduction

- John writing to Christians, but who were asking the question:
 - "what does a genuine Christian life look like?"
 - what rock does it cling onto? where are its roots?
- That's why we are doing this series of studies on 1 John:
 - to remind us and reassure us about the reality of our faith
 - and to help us understand what our faith implies...
- John comes in these verses to a key warning, a key deception they were facing
 - work through and see what it was and John's response...

Exposition

Verse 18

- *Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.*
- Probably "a last hour" rather than "the" - no definite article in Greek
 - though that lack isn't always definitive! (cf John 1:1!)
- Point is that they are living in the end times:
 - in terms of the spiritual progression of the world, this is the last phase before the end
 - early Christian church certainly lived with an **imminent expectation of Christ's return**, so much so that they were surprised when people died before he came back!
 - part of that expectation was the rise of a particular opponent of Christ, the **antichrist**
- Here John argues that they are living in the end times from the fact that they see around them the coming of many whose nature matches that of the antichrist:
 - they are anti-christs, they are against Christ and all that true faith in him requires
- John's argument is: **see many antichrists; their character matches that of the antichrist; therefore the coming of the antichrist is close; so we are living in the end times**

Verse 19

- *They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*
- Who are these antichrists?
 - they were in the past part of the church fellowship, but they went out left, departed
 - John sees that they were never truly part of the church - appearances can sometimes be deceptive
 - he argues that if they had really belonged to the church they could never have left it...
- Remember in context of early church:
 - no schisms yet!
 - today if someone left the Baptist church over a personality clash, and went to the Free Church, that wouldn't necessarily make us doubt their faith!
 - but there only was one church, the church!
- Clear Scriptural evidence for a church visible/invisible distinction!

Verse 20

- *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.*
- Holy Spirit is that anointing:
 - and we've already seen that the Holy Spirit is the one who illuminates, brings to light the truth;
 - John is affirming their faith, the presence of the Holy Spirit in them, and consequently their ability to see the truth

Verse 21

- *I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth.*
- He's pastorally sensitive:
 - making it clear he's not writing to them because he thinks they have strayed
 - but rather to reassure them that they haven't!
- A church has split; some forceful personalities have left, saying they are right and the remnant are wrong
 - who is right? how do you tell? John writes to the faithful remnant, to reassure them that they shouldn't be concerned they should have gone too!
 - *"you have the Holy Spirit in you; he shows the truth; you are in the truth!"*

Verse 22

- *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist - he denies the Father and the Son.*
- Who, then, is the liar?
 - the antichrist, that is anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ
 - **this is the fundamental lie**
 - go wrong here, and everything else false apart;
 - for instance, cults
 - and anyone who refuses to put their faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord
- And this last is the most critical:
 - for that is most people we meet!!
 - for most of us the key time this will come up is not some theological debate with someone who has real, considered, intellectual doubts about the faith - the classic liberal scholar
 - no, we'll come across this when we are at the bus stop, or chatting with a friend....
 - and, probably in passing, they'll reveal that they deny that Jesus is the Christ, God's promised one, the only way to God

Verse 23

- *No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*
- If we haven't got who we believe Jesus to be sorted, then we can't enter into relationship with the Father!
- for relationship with God comes through Jesus
- if we don't have relationship with Jesus, won't have with God
- if we do have relationship with Jesus, we will have with God!
- If we reject Jesus, we are not members of the heavenly family and we have no right to call God our Father!

Verse 24

- *See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.*
- What you have heard from the beginning points back to the simple gospel message:
 - crux of my coming to faith was preaching on the Cross;
 - Jesus is the Christ, the divine man, sent by God to deal with sin by taking our place
 - that is the touchstone of faith - all the rest stands or falls as a consequence of this
 - this is our foundation; we build on it; can't take it away!

Verse 25

- *And this is what he promised us - even eternal life.*
- Consequence of faith - eternal life, as we remain in Him

Verse 26

- *I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.*

- Fore-warned is fore-armed, basically!

Verse 27

- *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit - just as it has taught you, remain in him.*
- You don't need anyone to teach you - not dependent on "superior knowledge" of the heretics?
 - rather, the Holy Spirit is in you, he will show you
- Same is true for us today
 - we don't have an exalted elite, a category of Christians who understand and pass on to the rest!
 - not a priesthood - that has been done away with - only a high priest
 - remember image I used of circle round Christ?
 - there is no inner circle, mediating knowledge of God
 - it is all there in Scripture, illuminated by the in-dwelling Holy Spirit
 - you can go away and check - does what I say match what the Scriptures say?

Conclusion

- **Jesus is the Christ!**
 - **core truth!**
- **No need of a priestly elite:**
- **direct access, Spirit's illumination in all Christians**