

Module 8: 1 John 2:18-21

1) Observations

- a) Read 1 John 2:12-27 for context.
- b) What words do you see repeated often in verses 18-21?
- c) What contrasts do you see in these verses?
- d) What titles do you suggest for the paragraphs starting in verses 18 and 20?
- e) Transition
 - i) No connecting word
 - ii) A familiar word, “children” (same as verse 13).
 - iii) John reinforces his care and affection for his Christian audience, just as he did (12-14) before his previous thought in verses 15-17.
- f) “Antichrist”
 - i) Occurs only in John’s epistles. W. E. Vine says this word is used as follows:
 - (1) The antichrists who are forerunners of the Antichrist (though called a beast) in Revelation 13 (1 John 2:18 {2 times}, 22; 2 John 7)
 - (2) The spirit which already operates anticipatively of the Antichrist (1 John 4:3)
 - ii) Compare with similar, but different words
 - (1) Jesus referred to “false Christs” (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). These are the only two occurrences in the NT.
 - (2) John used “false prophets” (1 John 4:1 and 3 times in Revelation) and so did others 7 additional times in the NT (for a total of 11 times).
 - (3) Peter used “false teachers” in 2 Peter 2:1.
 - iii) Possible meanings
 - (1) Against Christ
 - (2) Instead of Christ
 - (3) Both – “one who, assuming the guise of Christ, opposes Christ” (Westcott)
 - iv) Antichrist is coming, while many antichrists have appeared (18)
- g) “They” and “us”
 - i) “They” are the multiple antichrists.
 - (1) 5 times in verse 19.
 - (2) The second “they went out” (NAS) is not in the original, but added in the English to smooth out the reading.
 - ii) In contrast, the many antichrists . . .
 - (1) Went out “from us”
 - (2) Were not really “of us”
 - (3) Would have remained “with us”
 - (a) If . . . had been “of us”
 - (b) This “if” is a 2nd class condition, stating an “if” condition that is known not to be the case. That is, “if they had been of us”, but we know that this was not the case.
 - (4) All are not “of us”
- h) Contrast beginning verse 20

- i) But (*kai*)
 - ii) “You . . . you . . .”, instead of “They . . . they . . .”
- i) “Anointing”
- i) Used here (20) and twice in verse 27 and nowhere else in the NT.
 - ii) It is the noun form (*chrisma*) of the verb *chrío* which appears 5 times in the NT (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; 2 Corinthians 1:21; Hebrews 1:9)
 - iii) The “Holy Spirit” *is* the anointing; it is not saying that the Holy Spirit is the one doing the anointing.
- j) What other observations do you see?
- 2) **Observational Questions** that guide **Interpretation**
- a) What is meant by the “last hour”?
- i) The first coming of Christ inaugurated a new age. The “age to come” had come and the “present age” was drawing to a close. These Christians knew themselves to be living “in the last days”. (Stott)
 - ii) The “last hour” has three possible meanings.
 - (1) The last period between the first and second comings of Christ. (Brooke, Dodd, Barclay). The Apostle John is then proved to be mistaken, since it has been almost two thousand years we have not yet seen the second coming of Christ, while John wrote less than a century after Christ’s first coming.
 - (2) It is “*a* last hour”, without a definite article. This is to mark a general character of the period and not its specific relation to “the end”. (Westcott, Lewis)
 - (3) The end of the old era and the consummation of the new, the last hour of the last days, but expressed as a theological truth rather than a chronological reference. (Stott)
 - (a) Jesus taught about the uncertainty of the day and the hour of His second coming (Mark 13:32-33; cf Acts 1:7).
 - (b) “No more remained but for Christ to appear for the redemption of the world” (Calvin).
 - (4) I hold to the third meaning. What John wrote in this passage was true and it is still true.
- b) Which of the possible meanings of “antichrist” listed above is used here? The choices again are “against Christ”, “instead of Christ”, or both.
- i) The two uses in verse 18 neither give the connotation of “against Christ” nor “instead of Christ”.
 - ii) The following verses would appear to have at least the meaning “against Christ”, as the antichrist is described as one who “denies” the Son, “does not confess” Jesus, and does “not acknowledge” Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7).
 - iii) 2 John 7 definitely has the sense of “instead of Christ”, as deceiver, counterfeiter, or substitute.
 - iv) If John wanted to convey antichrist as a substitute for Christ, one might think he would use the same word Christ himself used for “false Christs” (*pseudochristos*), since John probably remembered Christ using this term in Matthew 24:24. Why did John not do this?

- v) I believe antichrist has both meanings of “against Christ” and “instead of Christ”.
- c) From where or whom did “they” go out? (19)
 - i) From the Apostolic group, not from the local church fellowship (Hodges)
 - ii) From the ranks of the readers (Rosscup)
 - iii) I choose the second view, since the “us” in this context before and after 2:19 refers to the Christian readers, not the narrow group of apostles referred to in 1:1-5.
- d) Who is the “Holy One”, the source of the anointing in verse 20? See Mark 1:24, which refers to Jesus as the Holy One of God.

3) Interpretation

John once again reassures his flock by referring to them as his spiritual children. He does this before he discusses with them a topic that may alarm them: peers leaving their midst. It is now the last hour of the last days before Christ’s second coming. Though only God the Father knows the exact time of Christ’s return, there is nothing else that logically needs to happen before it. Previous teaching by Jesus and others after him, which they have heard, is that an antichrist, one who denies that Jesus is God in the flesh, is coming as part of the end times. Even now there are multiple antichrists within and without the church. This is corroborating evidence that they are in the last hour.

These antichrists were with John’s readers for a while, but they departed on their own. They tried to make it seem like they were a part of the flock, and perhaps even tried to convert some to be like them, but in reality they were not Christians saved by God’s grace, as John’s true children were. If they truly were believers, they would have persevered with the true children. They left their midst, so that this basic, fundamental difference would be made apparent to John’s children and others.

In contrast, all members of the true flock that remain have the Holy Spirit applied to them from the beginning of their salvation – this is the anointing which is from Jesus, the Holy One. This is something that all of the true flock knows.

John has written to his flock because he wants to reassure them that indeed they are the ones who know the truth, revealed to them by the Holy Spirit, in contrast to the antichrists who did not know the truth and consequently left. In this instance, John does not need to teach them anything new, as though they did not know the truth. John then confirms for them that lies are not compatible with truth, and therefore, if they stick with the truth, they do not need to be concerned about falling prey to lies as did the Gnostics and antichrists.

4) Applications

- a) How do you react to the presence of antichrists in the church and society?
- b) How significant is it in a practical sense that Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit?
- c) How do you live out the fact that you know the truth?

- d) Do you believe, as Barclay observes, that “the greatest Christian defence [against false claims] is simply to remember what we know”?
 - e) What other application do you have?
- 5) Handout for next week
- a) Thank the Lord for using your studies in 1 John to help you increase your assurance of eternal life.
 - b) Thank God for what you learned from verses 18-21, in particular.
 - c) Reread verses 18-27 for context.
 - d) Focus on verses 22-27.
 - e) How do these verses fit into the context of what we have already learned?
 - f) What do you think is the one main point of these verses? Make sure to base this interpretation on what you observe in the text. Remember, observation, then interpretation, then application.
 - g) Fill in the title for the paragraphs beginning in verses 22, 24 and 26 in the SURVEY CHART.