Hosea and The Epistles of John: *Hesed,* God's Covenant Love

Lesson 9: Covenant Opposition

Key Verse: "Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son."~1 John 2.22

Intrigue and deception are the hallmarks of a good "murder-mystery dinner" group game. Hosts assign characters to the players who don't know if they are the murderer until the game is being played out. How interesting to discover oneself as the perpetrator of the murder! Even more, no player is allowed to lie in the game. Instead, all players are encouraged to withhold the truth using clever deceptions or half-truths. While the game is played in good fun (and with many good laughs), the clever deceptions and half-truths of **The Antichrist** are serious and literally deadly. We live in a day where the mystery of **The Christ**, or Messiah, has been plainly and openly revealed in Jesus. Yet, the cunning, clever work of antichrists to mystify the simplicity of salvation and make a mystery of whether Jesus was both fully divine and fully man perpetrate eternal murderous harm to their victims. The plain, clear truth of Jesus, in whom there is no lie, eliminates anyone's ability to embrace a victim mentality. Instead, all who "know the truth" of Jesus as God's Son have their eternal life held secure by "the anointing" of the "Holy One" in them. Jesus' murder on the cross isn't a mystery game; it is salvation for all who say, "my God and my Savior."

High King of Heaven, our Just Judge who is also our Savior, what can we do but choose to abide in You? Thank You for teaching us that our sins deserve Your wrath, and then mercifully providing The Christ to save us from Your wrath. Even more, You anointed us, Your people, with Your Spirit so that we can love You and those You have placed in our lives. Build confidence in the eternal security of our salvation through this lesson. Build our faith in the surety of your anointing, teaching us even as we are surrounded by many gospels and teachers. Remind us that "our sins are forgiven for Your name's sake." (1 John 2.12)

1 John 2.18-27 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. **19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. **21** I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. **23** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you.

But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

Diamonds: In love, John alerts his siblings in Christ that time is ticking because it is the "last hour" before Jesus' promised return (Mark 13.32-37; John 14.1-7). He confirms the suspicions of his fellow Christ-following, devoted servants of God: those confusing gospels and prophets and false messiahs are both anticipated and expected during this "last hour" (Matthew 24.24-25). But rather than be frightened or anxious about the trustworthiness and truth of their own belief in Jesus as God's Son and Messiah, John buttresses them against confusing gospels, errant prophets, and antichrists by reminding them of what they and every believer has: you have the same Spirit as Jesus (V 20), you have God (V 23), and you have eternal life – presence – with both God and Jesus (V 25).

1. John probably delighted to recall when Jesus built his faith and buttressed him against confusing gospels, errant prophets, and antichrists. Read how Jesus comforted and assured John of the strength and surety of God's salvation through His Son, Jesus, in John 10.22-30. What promises of God does Jesus make in John 10.22-30?

2. What does Jesus teach about the security He and God the Father provide for a believer's eternal life with them (John 10.22-30)?

John hasn't shifted his intention to pot-stirring on the topic of why people leave a church, or even worse, why a church splits (or has a massive rupture and subsequent departure within its congregation). Instead, John is making clear that the doctrine of antichrists is so completely incompatible with God's revealed truth fulfilled in Christ that they can't stick around eternally saved Christ-followers very long. They leave (V 19). Their total withdrawal from the church, as well as becoming an apostate in their denying Christ (V 22), is ample evidence that "they all are not of us [genuine believers in Christ as Messiah]" (V 19). John remains fixed on encouraging and assuring his siblings in Christ of the veracity (or fidelity, trustworthiness) of their salvation through Jesus even when surrounded by confusing, popular, "Christ-ish" messages and theology. It is easy for modern readers to understand how confusing messages and religious doctrines that respect, revere, and even have great knowledge of the life of Christ can be for every believer. In fact, it is possible to live a lifestyle of discipline and goodness by following Jesus' instructions and His example. However, Dr. Allen reminds us that, "Right living is one thing. Right doctrine is altogether something else."[1]

3. Think of a time your spiritual spidey-sense alerted you that something about a gospel message, faith-based movement, or Christian book or study just wasn't right. What was your process for identifying or homing in on what was alerting your spiritual spidey-sense? What helped you pinpoint the theology or religious practice that ultimately was a denial of Jesus as the Christ?

When John encourages his siblings in Christ to remember what they heard "from the beginning" (V 24), he is referencing their first salvation encounter, or when the truth of the gospel caused them to confess their need for a Savior and place their eternal destiny in the hands of their Savior Jesus and His Father, God (John 10.28-29). John challenges them to deeply, daily internalize "the original message. Let it sink into your life" (V 24, The Message). In doing so, they will live a dynamic life in intimate, eternal fellowship with Jesus and with God the Father.[2]

4. Recall the story of your salvation in Christ. How do the basic truths of salvation, the "original message", keep you living "deeply in both Son and Father" (V 24, The Message)?

"John says Christian believers have received a special anointing (V 20, 27). The truth of Jesus is only received and understood by the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Jesus Himself often referred to the Holy Spirit as 'the Spirit of truth' (John 14.17, 16.13)... If we have the Spirit, no further anointing is needed. No truth God wants us to know about Him is beyond our access. No crucial revelation will come which is not already available to us in what God has revealed to us in His Word and by the Spirit. We have the truth; we have the anointing. We are not missing anything vital. Which means we can have confidence" (V 24).

5. Read John's concise list of the truth actively abiding in you in 1 John 2.12-14. What evidence do you find that these truths are deeply, daily internalized, or "sink[ing] into your life" (V 24, The Message)?

[1] Allen, p. 112

[2] Allen, p. 117

6. How are you living a dynamic life in intimate, eternal fellowship with Jesus and with God the Father?

It is helpful to read John's account of when he was taught by Jesus on the imperative need to "abide" in Jesus in John 15.1-10[3]. Not only does Jesus teach about our need to abide in Him, but He also teaches about His need to abide in us. His ability to abide, or dwell, in us is provided by the "anointing of the Holy One" (V 20), or by the Holy Spirit. In verses 26-27, John reminds them that they don't need a special spiritual teacher with a new revelation to teach them the truth about God or Jesus. Instead, the Holy Spirit, Jesus IN them (and us!), teaches them the eternal truth "about everything" (V 27). "For John, anointing is intertwined with instruction. We are to adhere to sound doctrine, but that is not the end. We are to live out that doctrine ethically. This can only be done as we 'abide in Him'."[4]

7. What is Jesus teaching you about the result of abiding in Jesus and Jesus likewise abiding in you?

Deity: The Christ[5]~ (1 John 2.22) The word, "christ", simply means "anointed one". In Greek, it translates to "messiah" or savior and deliverer. However, in Jesus we find *the* Christ (John 3.16-17).

"Anyone wanting to understand Jesus should pay attention to Jesus' understanding of Himself. In the Gospel of John in particular, we see that Jesus knew He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, the long-awaited Messiah, the only begotten Son of the Father, the divine Son of Man, and equal with God in power, rank, and glory.

Famously, in John's gospel, He describes His identity and purpose with "I am" statements.

- Jesus is the bread of life (John 6.35-51). He is manna from heaven and food for the hungry. Unless we feast on Him, we have no life in us.
- Jesus is the light of the world (John 8.12). He is the pillar of fire in the wilderness and salvation in a dark world. Unless we believe in Him, we will die in our sins.
- Jesus is the gate for the sheep (John 10.7-10). He is the Passover door and the entryway into the fold. Unless we come in by Jesus, we are thieves and robbers.
- Jesus is the good shepherd (John 10.11-18). He knows His flock, calls them by name, and lays down His life for the sheep. Unless He is our shepherd, we will not be safe from wolves and will not lie down in green pastures.
- Jesus is the resurrection and life (John 11.25-27). Whoever believes in Him will never die. Unless we belong to Him, we will not live forever in the age to come.
- Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14.1-7). He is Messiah, God in the flesh, and there is no other. Unless we know the Son and honor Him, we neither know the Father nor Him (Jesus).
- Jesus is the true vine (John 15.1-6). He is the one in whom we must remain if we are to bear fruit. Unless we abide in Him, we will be gathered up like dead branches, thrown into the fire, and burned.

Less well known, Jesus makes seven other "I am" statements throughout John's Gospel, but each of these is without a predicate. That is, instead of stating His identity by way of attributes and metaphors, Jesus simply and dramatically states that *He is*, a striking echo of the "I Am" declaration of Exodus 3.14.

- "I who speak to you am He" (John 4.26)
- "It is I; do not be afraid" (John 6.20)
- "Unless you believe that I am He you will die in your sins" (John 8.24)
- "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He" (John 8.28)
- "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8.58)
- "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe I am He" (John 13.9)
- "I told you that I am He" (John 18.8)

[3] Allen, p. 125

[4] Allen, p. 125

[5] DeYoung, pp. 168-169, *Jesus's Witness to Himself*

In all this, Jesus makes Himself equal to God and the object of all saving faith. Indeed, Jesus does not hesitate to say, "Believe in God; believe also in Me." (John 14.1) Jesus knew who He was. If we have ears to hear, we can know Him too."

The truth of God's plan to provide salvation through His Son, Jesus, has not changed, nor will it change. In Hosea, we have seen glimpses of God's promise to provide salvation to His people.

8. Review your answers to Question 8 from Lesson 8: *Covenant Judgment* (God's eternal security found in His disciplining judgment of His people). Which of the listed verses in Hosea illuminate God's plan to provide salvation for His people? How do you know Jesus is God's fulfilled plan of salvation?

Doctrine: The Antichrist~ (1 John 2.18) This word directly translates to "against Christ". Generically it refers to anyone against Christ (1 John 2.22-23) and results in total departure from the truth of Jesus as Messiah (Matthew 24.24-25). "There are many who claim to revere the words of Jesus and marvel at His ways. But if they deny His full divinity, they are actually denying *him*." Cults and other religious groups view Jesus as a holy prophet and even revere and deeply respect His life and His message. Other religious groups view Him as a powerful god-like archangel (even as the archangel Michael referenced in Jude 1.9, Revelation 12.7) or able to bridge the gap between God and man. Yet, each of these religions deny Jesus as both fully divine and fully man, denying Him as God's Son whose sacrifice provides salvation to all who believe in Him as their Savior. As such, they are antichrists, or against Christ and thereby against God Himself. "You can't choose God and reject Jesus. Since God has revealed Himself through His Son, Jesus, it is obvious that if you deny the Son, you are denying the Father as well"[6] (1 John 2.22-23).

However, John also mentions *the* Antichrist, which is the only time this word is used as a title in scripture! Reformed Presbyterians do not fixate on a person labeled as the Antichrist. "The small number of references [to the antichrist or antichrists], however does not mean that the antichrists in the world are not a force to be reckoned with, or that the coming antichrist is not perhaps the same powerful and diabolical figure as "the beast" in Revelation 13.1-20 and the "man of lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians 2.3…The enemy is obvious (we are not on the lookout for an emerging secret society or mysterious political figure) but not easily overcome."[7]

9. What has John taught you in this passage (1 John 2.18-27) about the reality of engaging with antichrists? How does he recommend we equip ourselves?

10. How does the security God provides in Jesus extinguishes fear, confusion, doubt, alarm, or panic about falling prey to an antichrist?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

[6] Allen, p. 116

[7] O'Donnell, p. 81

Lecture Outline:

Aim: The Holy Spirit teaches believers Christ-centered truth.

I. Real Deal Anointing (1 John 2.18-23) **T1:** The Holy Spirit anoints believers to equip them to combat all satan's Christ-denying lies.
   a. Who do you say Christ is?
   b. Which of satan's Christ-denying lies hv crept into your belief system?
   c. How is the Holy Spirit equipping you with Christ-centered truth as you study God's Word?
   d. What will you do to remain vigilant and ready to engage the antichrists presently here?

II. Real Deal Abiding (1 John 2.24-27) **T2:** The Holy Spirit abides in believers to protect them from the world's deceptions.
   a. What evidence in your life reveals the truth of the gospel is abiding in you?
   b. How is it controlling your thinking and your actions?
   c. What do you do each day to abide in The Anointed?
   d. How do you see the Holy Spirit actively protecting you from the world's deceptions?

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Allen, David L., *Fellowship in God's Family: Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013) pp. 109-125
DeYoung, Kevin, *Daily Doctrine,* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2024)
MacArthur, John, *1-3 John: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2007) pp. 93-104
O'Donnell, Sean, *1-3 John: Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2015)