

S E S S I O N T W E N T Y - O N E

**A WARNING OF ENTICEMENT
FROM THE WORLD AND FALSE TEACHERS***1 John 2:12—27***I. INTRODUCTION**

In the opening section of the book, John extended to the readers the opportunity to fellowship in apostolic truth. He wrote as one who represented the apostles to whom Christ had entrusted His truth. To fellowship with the apostles in the truth that they had safe-guarded, one must first recognize that God is light. Therefore, one cannot have fellowship with God without walking in the light as He is in the light. But John is writing to Christians—those who already had eternal forgiveness of sins. What was important for them, then, was to understand that they must learn to walk in obedience, and that whenever God makes the believer aware of sin, it must be confessed and forsaken. It is only through obedience that a Christian can enter into a more intimate *knowledge* of God, and one classic area of obedience (one the Lord Jesus had so strongly emphasized) was the command that His disciples should love one another.

In the next major section of the book (2:12-27), it becomes clearer why John was extending this invitation to apostolic truth. His readers were under attack from false teachers who were seeking to undermine the teaching passed down from the apostles. This is clear from such a verse as 1 John 2:26:

"These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you."

We do not know specifically from what source this false teaching was coming. Some have suggested that it might be an early form of Gnosticism, and others have suggested that it might have its source in the false teaching of Cerinthus. The latter is said to have held that the man Jesus and the divine Christ were two distinct beings. Supposedly, the divine Christ descended on the human Jesus at his baptism, but left him prior to his death on the cross. From what we can gather by the epistle of 1 John itself, the false teachers certainly did present a distorted Christology and apparently a theology that tolerated sin and disobedience.

II. COMMENDATION OF THE READERS (2:12-14)

Prior to warning the readers about loving the world and listening to the false teachers, John first makes several commendations.

A. Structuring of Verses 12-14**1. Observations:**

- a. These verses are obviously very carefully structured. There are two cycles, and within each cycle he makes a positive comment to "children," "fathers," and "young men."
- b. The middle comment to the "fathers" is the same, but the other comments differ.

- c. In the final comment to the "young men" in 2:14, three affirmations are given—a contrast to the single affirmation in the preceding statements.
 - d. Note the tense change ("I am writing" to "I have written"). This does not appear to have great significance, since the aorist verb form ("I have written") is used elsewhere in 2:21,26 and 5:13. Maybe a stylistic variation.
2. Possible Rationale for Three Groups
- a. Three stages of maturity. [Problem: would expect "fathers" last].
 - b. There is no discernible difference—all three are given to the same people
 - c. The "children" is directed to all readers, whereas the other two are directed to two groups. Note that *τεκνία* is used frequently in the epistle to the readership at large (2:1,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; and 5:21).

B. Significance of This Unit

Emphasis seems to fall on the 3rd element of the chain, particularly since it has a tri-fold statement in the second cycle. The "evil one" is undoubtedly Satan—see 3:12 and 5:18-19. The thoughts of being strong, having the Word abiding within and overcoming the evil one suggests a "warfare mentality." This may be related to the following material, in which spiritual warfare to the believer is exposed. John desires the readers to be victorious over Satan and his forms of attack upon the believers. And indeed, his commendation suggests that victory can be had—to those, of course, who are strong and have the Word of God abiding within.

III. THE ENTICEMENT OF "THE WORLD" (2:15-17)

- A. Notice John's use of the term "world" elsewhere. The "world" is associated with the false teachers in 4:5. It is that sphere dominated by Satan. Thus, it apparently represents the world of humanity in its rebellion against God and which is dominated by Satan.
- B. "the love of the Father" -- probably an objective genitive, i.e., "love for the Father," since the first part of the sentence has the world as the object of one's love. Thus, a Christian is either moving in the direction of loving the world or loving the Father.
- C. Verse 16 represents the characteristics of the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. These are placed in contrast to "doing the will of God." Flesh? Sin nature as in Gal 5:16ff. or simply "human cravings", i.e., for things that are earthly—some of which will be sinful.

IV. THE ATTACK BY THE FALSE TEACHERS (2:18-27)

- A. The Departure of the False Teachers from Apostolic Fellowship (2:18-19)

- 1. Antichrist – many antichrists

The readers were familiar with teaching about Bible prophecy, and they knew that the Antichrist was predicted to arise before the Lord's return. The term for Antichrist is only used in this epistle, but he seems to be the same as the "man of sin" in 2 Thes 2. The present *antichrists* are the false teachers (see 4:1-3).

- 2. Notice the *they-us-you* references in vv 19-20. Implication: the point is not that they (professing Christians) have left Christian fellowship or churches, but that they (false teachers) went out from association with the apostles. Cf. Acts 15:24

for use of the same phrase "they went out from us." Also compare Gal 2:4. "Not really of us"—i.e., not in harmony with the apostles and their teaching. Those from the world listen to them (4:4-6).

B. The Propagation of Lies by the False Teachers (2:20-24)

1. What is the "anointing" (χρῖσμα)? This is not some spiritual gift, but a reference to the Holy Spirit, who was given to teach them the truth (note vs 27—"His anointing teaches you about all things").
2. "the Holy One" - common expression for God in the OT (Ps 89:18; Prov 9:10; Isa 1:4; 43:3,15; and 45:11), which the disciples applied to Jesus (note Jn 6:69; Acts 3:14). See Acts 2:33—Jesus bestows the Holy Spirit.
3. "know the truth" -- i.e., they had an adequate knowledge of Christian truth. The challenge to them was whether they were going to stick with the truth or be deceived into believing the lies of the enemy.
4. One primary lie coming against them concerned Christology. What is meant by the expression "who denies that Jesus is the Christ"? Personally, I think more is meant than simply denying that Jesus was the Messiah. This was probably a distorted teaching about Christ coming in the flesh. See 1 Jn 4:1-3.
5. "does not have the Father" (vs 23)
"Have the Father" probably ought to be interpreted as "has the Son" in 5:12. "Denying the Son" must be interpreted in light of 1 Jn 4:2 and 2 John 7. False teachers who go to this extent do not have God. Here, "confessing Christ" means to confess that He has come in the flesh. Be careful here: the text does not seem to be talking about a Christian who once confessed Christ but later denied Him, but about false teachers who are confessing something false about Christ.
6. "let that abide in you" -- i.e., the apostolic teaching (recall 2:14)

C. John's Reminder of Apostolic Truth (2:25-27)

1. Perhaps the readers were being taught by the false teachers that they needed to follow their teaching to have eternal life. John reminds the readers that apostolic belief, based on a correct Christology, is the one that brings "eternal life." The readers must not be deceived into thinking they do not have eternal life.
2. Verse 27 -- not a denial that teachers are needed (cf. Eph 4). The point is that the readers did not need this teaching by false teachers. Rather, they needed to stick with the teaching they had already received from the indwelling Holy Spirit.

FINAL LESSONS FROM OUR STUDY