

6. Learning to Recognize the Truth

In our last topic, we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to change their love for the world so that they learn to love God. Then, they will have a great desire to carry out the will of Father, instead of being tempted by the temporary pleasures of the world. Today, we want to focus on how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize the truth. Only as they learn to recognize the truth will they be able to practice and teach the truth.

In 1 John 2:18-20, we read, “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 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 they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” Here, we see that one of the things we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize is the characteristics of false teachers, so they will not be deceived by them.

Since this is the first time the word “antichrist” is used, we need to understand who the Antichrist is. This is the proper name used of the coming world ruler who will rule the world during the tribulation. He will oppose and seek to replace Christ in the minds of people. Other descriptions of the Antichrist are given in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, Matthew 24:15, Daniel 8:9-11, Daniel 11:31-38, and Daniel 12:11. John used the word antichrist all five times it is used in the Bible. Three times, John used this title to refer to the Antichrist and we will see the other two times in our topic today.

As you notice, two of those five uses are in 1 John 2:18 quoted above. John warned that the future Antichrist is coming, but also said that there are many antichrists in the world today. These antichrists are false teachers who have the same goal as the future Antichrist. Their goal is to oppose and seek to replace Christ in the minds of people. Paul warned of such false teachers while talking to the elders of the church at Ephesus. In Acts 20:29-30, Paul warned them of two types of false teachers. Those verses say, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” The first type of false teachers are described as savage wolves who come in and try to destroy the flock. These are false teachers that are outside the church. These false teachers try to destroy Christians.

However, the second type of false teachers are false teachers who are inside the church. Paul describes them in verse 30. We see three characteristics of such false teachers:

They rise up from within the church.

They speak perverse things.

They seek to draw away disciples after themselves.

This second group of false teachers try to deceive Christians and lead them astray. These are

actually much more dangerous, because they arise from within the church. As a result, we see that these are false teachers who claim to be Christians and seek to lead weak Christians astray. Ephesians 4:14 says, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” Here, we see that such false teachers seek to deceive weak Christians with false doctrines. They seek to lead them astray by trickery and cunning craftiness because of their deceitful plotting.

In addition to arising from within the church, the second characteristic of these false teachers is that they speak perverse things. This means that these false teachers seek to corrupt, pervert and turn people from the right path. This word is used twice in Acts 13:8-10, to describe Elymas, the sorcerer. His goal was to prevent Sergius Paulus from hearing the Word of God. Instead, Paul dealt with the perverse things that Elymas was trying to teach, and Sergius Paulus believed and put his trust in Christ. Paul tells us how to live in the middle of a perverse generation, in Philippians 2:14-16, where we read, “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Here, we see that we are to show our physical and spiritual children how to hold fast to the Word of life.

The third characteristic of false teachers is that they seek to draw away disciples after themselves. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 describes people with itching ears who pursue teachers who will turn them away from the truth, when those verses say, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” Here, we see that false teachers will usually be very entertaining and tell people in the church what they want to hear, instead of what they need to hear. The previous verse, 2 Timothy 4:2, told Timothy what to do and how to respond to such false teachers, when that verse says, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” We want to help our children understand that true believers need to hear the Word of God so they will not be deceived by such false teachers.

Helping our physical and spiritual children learn how to help newer or weaker Christians recognize the truth involves two things. First, as we have seen, we show them how and help them learn to recognize those who are false teachers. As they help weaker Christians begin to recognize false teachers, this prevents newer and weaker Christians from being deceived by false teachers. As 1 John 4:3 says, “And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” That is one part of our ministry as we help our children and is preventive in order to help protect them. The second is the positive. We want to help them learn to recognize true teaching.

1 John 2:20 says, “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” Here, we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to help newer or weaker Christians understand the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26, on the night before

He was crucified, Christ told the disciples, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” Here, we see that each Christian has the Holy Spirit living in his or her life to help them understand the things Christ taught and help them remember those teachings when questions or false teachings arise.

Later, that same evening, Christ explained to the disciples how to work with the Holy Spirit in evangelism. John 16:8-11 says, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” Here, we see that as we share the Scripture with unbelievers, the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces them of their sin of unbelief. As we share Scriptures about Christ, the Holy Spirit convinces an unbeliever that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One who paid the penalty for sin. Third, as we share Scriptures about the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit convinces the unbeliever that when Christ rose from the dead, Satan was judged and those who continue to follow Satan will share in his judgment.

Christ immediately followed these verses by saying, in John 16:13, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” Here, we see that Christ again promised that the Holy Spirit would guide believers into all truth. As we take our physical and spiritual children with us as we share the Gospel with their relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and other acquaintances, we have the opportunity to pray with our children and ask the Lord to guide us to the Scriptures the Holy Spirit wants to use to convict the unbeliever of the sin of unbelief, the fact that Christ is the Righteous One, and the fact that if the unbeliever continues to follow Satan, he will share in the judgment of Satan.

However, we want to show our children that the Holy Spirit does more than just give them the Scriptures to share with those who are not Christians. We also want to show them that the Holy Spirit helps them grow as Christians and learn how to teach other Christians. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” We want to help our children understand that the Holy Spirit helps us know the things that are freely given to us by God.

Second, we want them to know how to teach this truth to others. These verses tell us that we help them learn to do this by asking the Holy Spirit to teach them how to explain Scripture with Scripture. Christ often quoted the Old Testament to explain other Scriptures and to explain His teachings. We want to help our children become so familiar with the Word of God that the Holy Spirit can help them learn to explain Scripture with Scripture. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to recognize the truth and share the truth of the Word of God with others.