

the spirit of antichrist will be epitomized in an individual who obtains significant political and military power in order to wage war against all who confess Yeshua to be the true Messiah and the only Savior of sinners.

19–20 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

The opening line of v. 19, “They went out from us,” has an important and different word order in the Greek: the words “out from us” (ἐξ ἡμῶν) stand first in the sentence, making it read “out from us they went.” The Greek, therefore, indicates that John intends to emphasize the words “out from us,” meaning a clear and definite separation. Further, when these words are followed by the verb “went out” (ἐξῆλθαν, *eksēlthan*), it means that

the writer is referring to a group of individuals who, at one time, had been a part of the community to which he is addressing the letter.¹

John’s meaning is therefore quite certain. When in the previous verse (v. 18) he makes the bold statement that “you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared,” these antichrists are the very ones who, in our verse, are identified as those who “went out from us.” We may confidently assert, then, that those who have left the community of believers to whom John addresses this epistle, were those who had confessed Yeshua to be the promised Messiah of Israel’s prophets, the One Isaiah calls “Immanuel,” God with us. They had been full participants within the community of believers. Further, in recanting their earlier confession of faith and therefore rejecting Yeshua, they likewise reject the fact that He “is from the beginning” (2:13–14) i.e., that He is co-equal with YHVH in His divine attributes, that by Him all things were created (Jn 1:3), and that eternal salvation is to be obtained only through faith in Him (Jn 14:6). In their rejection of Yeshua and His *ekklesia*, they therefore participate together with the same spirit of the final antichrist, that is, the spirit who is “the evil one,” the devil (cf. vv. 13–14).

In writing that “they went out from us,” some take the word “us”

1 Martin M. Culy, *I, II, III John: A Handbook of the Greek Text* (Baylor Univ Press, 2004), p. 48.

to mean that John himself was part of the community from which these people went out.¹ Others take the word “us” simply as a general reference to believers in Yeshua, or the *ekklesia*, i.e., the company of true believers.² Regardless of the specific reference to which the word “us” points, John’s meaning is certain: those who have left or “gone out” from the community of believers have openly identified themselves as those who deny Yeshua and repudiate His claim to be the only One by whom eternal salvation may be obtained.

but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; – Some, when reading our text, ask an obvious question: were those who “went out” at one time true believers with genuine saving faith, and then in their denial of Yeshua, lost that faith and with it their salvation? The answer, of course, is “no,” and John makes this clear when he states that those who have left and denied Yeshua were never really “of us.” Though they initially confessed Yeshua and even participated within the believing community, the fact that they denied Him and have therefore left the community is proof that their confession was only lip service and not genuine.

Furthermore, in the next phrase John gives us the essential criteria by which we know those who left were never genuine believers in Yeshua. If their faith had been genuine, they would have never denied Yeshua and left the believing community. John makes it clear that all those who left were never truly “of us,” that is, were never truly part of those who constitute the genuine believing community. True, they gathered together with the believing community and no doubt participated in times of worship and study of the Scriptures, but they were never truly believers because they had never been given the gift of saving faith—they did not belong to the source of salvation, namely, the Messiah Yeshua. Or to put it in Pauline language, they were never “in Messiah.”

The opening phrase of v. 19, “they went out from us,” is in stark contrast to the Greek verb μένω, *menō*, translated by the NASB as “abides” or “remains,” found eleven times in this second chapter of 1John.³ Such repetitive use of the concept “to abide” or “to remain” is parallel with the words of Yeshua which John records in his Gospel:

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who

1 See Kruse, *1John*, p. 102; Smalley, *1John*, p. 101.

2 See Kistemaker, *1John*, p. 276.

3 2:6, 10, 14, 17, 19, 24(3x), 27(2x), 28.

abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. (Jn 15:4–6)

Yeshua's words make it amply clear that those who ultimately deny Him and never repent of their unbelief, are forever separated from Him and are therefore without hope of salvation. The writer to the Hebrews likewise affirms this reality.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. (Heb 6:4–6)

but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. – Here John re-emphasizes that leaving the community establishes their open denial of Yeshua and is proof positive that they never possessed genuine, saving faith. Moreover, the Greek is quite emphatic that there are no exceptions. Those who deny Yeshua and manifest their denial of Him by distancing themselves from the believing community are “all not of us.” The older KJV rendering of this phrase could leave some with the impression that there are exceptions: “but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us,” which some could read as though “some were of us.” But the Greek text is clear: all who deny Yeshua and who therefore forsake the believing community have shown themselves to be identified as antichrists.¹

Thus, the positive mark of genuine, saving faith in Yeshua is that of perseverance. Perseverance of the believer is the fruit of God's redemptive act. It is the born again/born-from-above person who has been given a new heart and is therefore both willing and able to walk in obedience to God and His word through the power of the indwelling Ruach. Thus, perseverance is a cooperative work between the believer and the Almighty, but all who are truly saved will persevere in their faith: “persevere we will; persevere we must.”

1 See Westcott, *1John*, p. 72, who shows that “When the $\pi\acute{\alpha}\varsigma$ [“all”] is separated by the verb from the $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}$ [“not”], the negation, according to the usage of the New Testament, is always universal (*all...not*), and not partial (*not all*).”

We see in the Scriptures both the inevitable work of God to cause His chosen ones to persevere in faith, as well as the necessity of the believer to actively exercise faith and grow in being sanctified unto God. Referencing the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31–34), the prophet states:

I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. (Jer 32:40)

And the words of Yeshua and His Apostles affirm that those who have true saving faith have eternal life.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (Jn 5:24)

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Messiah died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Rom 5:8–10)

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:29–30)

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph 1:13–14)

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Yeshua Messiah our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24–25)

This is, in fact, the conclusion that John gives in the very text we are studying, for in v. 25 of our chapter he writes: “This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.” (1Jn 2:25)

All too often these great verses of promise have been read as though the Bible teaches us that the “believer” is simply to rely and relax in the promises of God and plays no part himself or herself in “persevering in the faith.” But this is to misunderstand the biblical teaching regarding perseverance. While it is an inevitability that all those who belong to Yeshua will persevere in their faith, since this is what God has promised, the believer fully participates in persevering because that is the very characteristic of the new covenant which is characterized by the Torah being written upon the heart. Therefore, as John as already taught us, the believer both desires to obey God and is enabled to do so (1Jn 2:1–6). Persevering in faith is the inevitable life of all who have been redeemed by God’s grace because we have become new creations in Messiah Yeshua (2Cor 5:17). Though the believer may fall into temptation and sin, and even commit grievous sins, they will surely come to repentance and find forgiveness as they confess their sin. Thus, such lapses in holy living do not cause them to lose their salvation nor to be separated from Yeshua. As Paul notes:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord. (Rom 8:38–39)

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. – Here is the stark contrast: there are those who gathered together with the believing community but denied the Messiah and departed. The true believers, however, remain steadfast in their faith and within the body of Messiah and John states that they “have an anointing.” Indeed, the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ, *mashiach*, from which our English word “Messiah” is derived, means “an anointed one.” In the Tanach, we see that priests (Ex 28:41), kings (2Sam 5:3), and prophets (1Ki 19:16) were anointed. It seems clear that the ceremony of anointing with oil was to mark the beginning of their respective duties and in so doing, to consecrate them to their sacred tasks.

It is evident that when Yeshua underwent a *mikveh* by the hands of John, the Ruach descending upon Him as a dove was symbolic of just such an anointing, for He was to fulfill all three offices, being prophet, priest and king *par excellence*. The divine voice that came from heaven declared, “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well-pleased: Listen

to Him” (Matt 3:17; Mk 9:7). That this was an anointing by the Ruach HaKodesh is confirmed by Peter at the house of Cornelius:

You know of Yeshua of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. (Acts 10:38)

Thus, Yeshua first takes up the role of the prophet, proclaiming and revealing the will and plan of His Father. On the cross, He presents Himself as the guilt offering for His people (cf. Is 53:10) and undertakes the role of the priest as He ascends on high to make intercession for those He saves (Heb 7:24-25), applying (as it were) the blood of His sacrifice to all who would be saved through His intercession at the right hand of the Father. And one day our Savior will return to reign as king forever (Lk 1:33; Rev 11:15).

The picture of Yeshua being anointed by the Ruach at His *mikveh* carries forward the idea of consecration to a sacred task, for it is at this time that His public ministry as the promised Messiah begins. It is also significant that before His ascension, He promises to His disciples that He would send the Ruach,¹ not only to remind them of His words and teachings, but also to empower them and the disciples they would make for Yeshua, to expand the discipling commission to every nation. If we consider the fact the Yeshua is the head of the body which is the *ekklesia* He promised to build,² and we consider the picture given to us in Ps 133 of the anointing of Aaron as high priest, it seems most probable that the anointing John is speaking of in our text is that which is accomplished by the Ruach HaKodesh Who indwells all who belong to the Messiah. For when the head is anointed, the oil flows down upon the body.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. (Ps 133:1–2)

This seems to be Paul’s point when he writes:

Now He who establishes us with you in Messiah and anointed us is God, Who also sealed us and gave us the Ruach in our hearts as a pledge. (2Cor 1:21–22)

1 Cf. John 14:16ff.

2 Cf. Matt 16:18; Eph 5:23.

In fact, the Greek word here translated as “pledge” is ἀρραβών (*arrabōn*), a transliteration of the Hebrew word עֲרֻבֹן (*‘erubōn*) which means “a security, a pledge” (cf. Gen 38:17–20). It is a “payment of part of a purchase price in advance,”¹ the earnest guaranteeing the full payment.

Therefore, when John describes the believers as “having an anointing from the Holy One,” he is teaching us that all who are children of God through faith in Yeshua have been consecrated unto Him by the very presence of the Ruach HaKodesh within them. And the abiding Holy Spirit is that assurance, that “down payment” or “signed guarantee” that we are forever His and that He would never allow us to be snatched from His hand.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. (Jn 10:27–28)

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.... (Eph 1:13)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30)

...and you all know. – The anointing of which John writes is the very presence of the Ruach in the lives of all who belong to Yeshua. It is through the Ruach illuminating the minds or hearts of His people that the word of God, the Scriptures, become active and enabling in their lives. Thus, when John states that “you all know,” we understand him to be saying that “you all know the truth,” for this is what he explicitly states in the next verse.

Some manuscripts have “and you know all things”² but this cannot be what John intended, for surely the believer grows in the knowledge of the truth (2Pet 3:18). Rather, the truth that all believers know is that Yeshua is the true Messiah, the promised Savior, and that salvation is through faith in Him and in Him alone.

1 So BDAG, “ἀρραβών”.

2 A C (049). 33. 1739 **ⲙ** latt sy bo, and thus the TR (KJV) has this reading. The reading “you all know” is found in **Ⲡ P Ψ** pc; Hes.

21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

John ends this paragraph by affirming that those believers to whom he writes do know the truth, and that he was not presuming otherwise when he penned his epistle. Since there existed within the community those who were deceived and denied the truth by turning their backs upon Yeshua and leaving the community, John does not want those who remained firm in their faith to think that he might view them in the same light as those who have left.

This gives a good example of the pastoral heart of John, and offers advice to those who are overseers within believing communities and are therefore charged with shepherding those under their care (Acts 20:28). John, as a shepherd caring for the spiritual welfare of those to whom he writes, speaks with authority but does so by affirming his confidence in the faith of those he addresses. As Yarbrough writes:

Dominical and apostolic authority are effective when administered with a shepherd's care rather than a tyrant's force. Addressing a community that has until recently harbored those of deviant belief or practice or both, John knows that reasserting apostolic truth is a delicate undertaking. He must not alienate readers by seeming to talk down to them. So in good faith...he affirms his solidarity with them, no doubt seeking to rally reciprocal response. His counsel assumes not their ignorance but their sophistication in the matters at hand. They understand the truth, and because of this he writes with confidence.¹

The truth that they know is based upon the valid testimony of eyewitnesses, chief among them being John himself (cf. 1Jn 1:1–4). To be beguiled by those who deny the facts is to give into ignorance and deception. Even though the salesman's pitch seems utterly persuasive, the facts are what should ground a person's decisions.

Yet we know that it is the fruit of pride—the fountain of pride being the sinful nature—to desire to be accepted within the circle of those who present themselves as elite, as those who know what others do not, and who are therefore applauded and sought after. It may well be that those who had denied Yeshua and who had left the believing community were those who had originally joined the followers of the Way, having previously been part of the synagogue community which had rejected Yeshua. Having been rejected by the Jewish community,

1 Yarbrough, *1John*, p. 152.

they began to question the basis for their original attraction to Yeshua and His followers. This presented the ultimate question: whether they would accept the facts relating to Yeshua, His death, resurrection and ascension, as proof that He is the promised Messiah, or give into the lies they heard from those who had rejected Yeshua. It seems very possible that the desire to be accepted by the larger Jewish community may well have been the added weight that solidified their decision to deny Yeshua and leave the believing community.

If this scenario approaches the situation within the community to which John writes, then the words of Yeshua in Luke 14:26 are clearly applicable.

If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. (Lk 14:26)

The word “hate” (μισέω, *miseō*) used in this verse does not imply a heart of anger or unforgiveness. Rather, “love” and “hate” in the Scriptures are a pair of terms often used to denote “loyalty within a covenant relationship” on the one hand, and “lack of covenant relationship” on the other. When God speaks through the prophet Malachi and states: “Jacob I have loved but Esau I have hated” (Mal 1:2–3, cf. Rom 9:13), He is stating the fact that He has entered into covenant with Jacob and has not done so with Esau.

Thus, Yeshua teaches that one cannot be His disciple, claiming to love Him, i.e., having entered into covenant with Him, and at the same time maintain a covenant relationship with those who have rejected Him, even if those persons include one’s family. In short, a person cannot serve two masters who are themselves diametrically opposed to each other. This does not mean that believers in Yeshua whose family members are unbelievers must distance themselves from their family, or treat them in unkind ways. But what it does mean is that one must be fully committed to obey the commands of Scripture by walking in the footsteps of Yeshua, even if this goes counter to the wishes of one’s family members and may even result in being rejected by them. A believer’s perspective must be that Yeshua takes priority in all matters of life.

and because no lie is of the truth. – John’s statement is both categorical and yet specific, for it is categorically true that a “lie” (ψεῦδος, *pseudos*) is defined as that which is untrue. And no one willingly wants to hold as true that which is a lie, especially in those matters which are held to

be of utmost importance.¹

Yet this statement is also specific, for as the following verse makes clear, and as the larger context also affirms, John is talking specifically about “the lie” of all lies, the ultimate lie which many will embrace, namely, that Yeshua is not the Messiah but an impostor. Paul likewise speaks of “the lie.”

For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe the lie [πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει]. (2Thess 2:11)

For they exchanged the truth of God for the lie (τῷ ψεύδει), and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Rom 1:25)

In Paul’s words to the community in Thessalonica, he is referring to those who were unwilling to receive “the love of the truth so as to be saved” (2:9) and who therefore are sent the “deluding influence” which confirms them in their deception. In Romans, Paul is describing those who, though having the clear testimony of the creation, refuse to accept the truth and rather cling to “the lie” and in doing so, reject the Creator, Who in the context is clearly Yeshua.

Likewise, when John affirms that “no lie is of the truth,” his primary reference is to “the lie” that states Yeshua is not the Messiah. No matter how convincing the arguments of the enemy may appear, those who have been given the gift of saving faith will never accept “the lie.” Thus John affirms the persevering faith of the believers to whom he writes by stating his confidence in their knowledge of the truth. As F. F. Bruce remarks,

They know it because they know Him, and this knowledge is theirs because they have received “the Spirit of Truth (John 14:6)...Those who have come to know the truth “as it is in Jesus (Eph 4:21) have, it is implied, a built-in spiritual instinct which enables them to detect and refuse whatever is basically

1 “I mean that no one is willingly deceived in that which is the truest and highest part of himself, or about the truest and highest matters; there, above all, he is most afraid of a lie having possession of him... but I am only saying that deception, or being deceived or uninformed about the highest realities in the highest part of themselves, which is the soul, and in that part of them to have and to hold the lie, is what mankind least like; —that, I say, is what they utterly detest.” (Plato, *The Republic*, Bk 2)

incompatible with that truth, no matter how speciously and eloquently it may be set before them.¹

22–23 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

To deny that Yeshua is the Messiah is to deny that He is “the Son of God” (1Jn 5:5) or that He “has come in the flesh” (1Jn 4:2). John asks, “Who is the liar?” and the answer is, “the Devil.” Thus, the final antichrist will be empowered by the evil one himself, and all who persist in believing and perpetrating the lie, likewise participate with the evil one.

Once again, John may have the early Gnostic teachings in view as he writes this. He may be referring to the Docetic teaching of Cerinthus, who gained popularity in the last decade of the 1st Century CE. Cerinthus accepted the general dualistic worldview in which an inferior power, not the God of the Bible, created the material universe. But in order not to exclude Yeshua within this worldview,

he distinguished the man Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary who was endowed with greater virtue and wisdom than other men, from the Christ, Who descended on Yeshua in the form of a dove after He was baptized, empowering Him to perform miracles and proclaim “the unknown Father,” who left Him before He died, so that “Jesus suffered and rose again, while the Christ remained immune from suffering, since He was “a spiritual being.”²

The incarnation of Yeshua is, without a doubt, one of the primary mysteries of our faith, for how could the infinite, eternal God take on flesh and become a man? Yet herein lies a fundamental truth of our faith, that far from our ability to explain the incarnation within the realm of our finite minds, we affirm and confess as true what God has plainly revealed.

By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. (1Tim 3:16)

1 F. F. Bruce, *1John*, p. 72.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 17.