

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

**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.”<sup>2</sup>

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)

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

2 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

*This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father;* – If the scenario I suggested earlier, that those who denied Yeshua and left the community to which John is writing, were previously part of the unbelieving synagogue community and who therefore went back to that community after denying Yeshua, then it is clear that from their own perspective they most certainly had not denied the Father in their denial of Yeshua. Yet John is very clear: the person who denies the Son has, in fact, likewise denied the Father.

This agrees with the words of Yeshua Himself:

All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matt 11:27)

He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. (Jn 15:23–24)

Therefore, to reject Yeshua as an impostor and thus to label Him a false Messiah, is likewise to reject His word and His revelation of the Father. In so doing, one rejects the Father Who sent Yeshua. Moreover, to reject the “historical Jesus” as many modern and liberal theologians have done, is likewise to reject the Father. For John clearly is speaking of “the historical Yeshua.” This, in itself, makes it evident that to deny the historicity of the Scriptures is likewise to deny both the Son and the Father.

This speaks directly to those in the Messianic Movement who teach that Jewish people who sincerely seek to keep Torah but who have rejected the “Jesus of the Church” may actually “be saved” and just not know it. While it is certain that God, and God alone, is the final judge of all, the Scriptures make it amply clear that those who persist in rejecting Yeshua as the promised Messiah have likewise rejected the Father. Whatever “god” they claim to worship is not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and therefore not the Father as revealed in the Scriptures Who sent His Son to be the Savior of sinners.

John’s language in our verse is a bit curious, when he uses the verb “has” (ἔχω, *echō*), in the phrase “does not have the Father,” for the Greek verb, like the English, can carry the sense of “posses, contain, own.”

But *echō* can also signify “to stand in close relationship with someone,”<sup>1</sup> and this is clearly the meaning in our text. The one who confesses Yeshua as Messiah and Savior, placing faith in Him for one’s eternal salvation, has come into a close, covenant relationship with Him, and thus with the Father. For only the Son can reveal the Father to men (Matt 11:27; Jn 1:18; 12:44f; 14:9) and only the Son can represent men before the Father and thereby reconcile them to the Father (1Jn 2:1f; Jn 14:6; 1Tim 2:5).

**24-25 As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.**

Having assured those to whom he writes that they do, indeed, know the truth that Yeshua is the promised Messiah and that it is only through Him that right-standing before the Father can be obtained, John goes on to impress upon his readers the safeguards against heresy.

The first is to remain steadfast, to “abide, remain” (*μένω, menō*) in the truth of the message they had heard from the beginning of their confession of faith in Messiah. This is the message Abraham believed (Rom 4:1–3), the message preached and more fully explained by Moses and the prophets, and the same message heralded by the Apostles as the fullness of the Gospel message was made known in the incarnate One, Yeshua. When John was writing, the other Apostles had passed away. And, it is possible that some of those who had confessed Yeshua as their Messiah were expecting that the Roman oppression would cease and the era of shalom would prevail. Now that John alone was left of the Twelve, some may have begun to think that they either had misunderstood the Gospel message, or that the message they had received was somehow in error. Rather, John exhorts them to remain firm in believing and confessing the truth which they had initially received, the truth as it is in Yeshua. But this is something to which they must attend, it is not automatic. Once again we see that perseverance is the true mark of one who possesses saving faith. How easily do people “run after” the newest trend or the novel teaching. But here John warns us to remain firm in the ancient truth, found in the Scriptures themselves, for the truth does not change—it is the very revelation of the immutable God.

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1 So BDAB, “ἐχω”, #2., p. 420.

Christians should always be “conservative” in their theology. To have “itching ears,” ever running after new teachers, listening to anybody and never arriving at a knowledge of the truth, is a characteristic of the “perilous times” which shall come “in the last days” (2Tim 3:1, 7; 4:3).<sup>1</sup>

According to Luke’s recounting of Paul’s interaction with the philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens, it was characteristic of the Athenians to always be looking for something novel or new.

Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new. (Acts 17:21)

But while this may characterize the worldly philosophers and those seeking their “wisdom,” the believers in Yeshua are identified as walking in the ancient paths of God’s wisdom and His righteous teaching. Once again, the word of God, the Bible, remains the anchor by which the child of God remains steadfast and is not blown out to sea by every wind of doctrine. Abiding in the word of God is the means by which one’s faith is strengthened and by which one is both settled in his own faith and seen by others as firm in the faith. But it is not only the Scriptures as personally read, studied, and treasured in one’s heart and mind and coupled with prayer, but it is also by the living out of the word—by applying the word to one’s daily living. And one of the primary means God has given us to enhance the application of the word in our lives is community with other believers. Our communion with the Father and the Son ought also to move us to have community with other believers, for it is in bearing one another’s burdens that we fulfill the Torah of Messiah (Gal 6:2). What is more, it is by serving one another in accordance with the truth that causes the spiritual growth of each one and safeguards one another from falling into error and the trickery of men. Rather, in community we help one another “grow up in all aspects unto Him,” that is, to become more and more like Messiah (Eph 4:14–16). This is what John means when he writes: “you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.”

*This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.* – Those of us who have been raised in believing homes and taught by our parents from an early age, may not feel the keen edge of the phrase “eternal life,” for that phrase may have become “common place” in our vocabulary. But we should be reminded that in the ancient Greco-Roman

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1 Stott, *1John*, p. 113.

society, many held the view that the future was left to chance. For example, Plutarch wrote:

... yet the future may be prevented by Fortune, while the present cannot be taken away; nevertheless these men cast aside the present gift of Fortune as something alien to them, while they dream of the future and its uncertainties.<sup>1</sup>

But we know of certainty that God is in control of all things, and that our times and our lives are in His hands. Moreover, we know that eternal life is promised to all who are in Messiah, for Yeshua taught this as did His disciples.

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)

For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. (Jn 6:40)

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)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord. (Rom 6:23)

Of this we may be certain: God keeps His promises. What is more, the phrase “eternal life” in our verse is more literally rendered from the Greek as “the eternal life,” having the definite article (τὴν ζῶην τὴν αἰώνιον). John intends us to know that this is eternal life which only God can give, and it is only available through the work of His Son, Yeshua.

**26–27 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.**

The verb ἔγραψα (*egraspa*) in v. 26 is in the aorist tense, and thus the NASB translates “I have written” rather than “I am writing.” But this

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1 Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, Marius 46.2–4.

particular use of the aorist tense is common in letter writing, for by the time the recipients receive the letter, the writing itself will have been completed. This is traditionally referred to as the “epistolary aorist.” Thus the ESV rightly translates “I write these things to you...” and the NIV translates “I am writing these things to you...” The point is simply this: when John uses the “epistolary aorist,” he is not referring to a previous epistle or letter which he has written. He is using the customary way of referring to that which he is currently writing to them and which they will receive in due time.

John has already made it clear to his readers that he was not writing to them because he felt they had not yet received the truth, for their remaining steadfast in the very gospel they had received was proof that they were abiding in the truth. In 2:13-14 John states that he was writing to them because they “know the Father” and because “they know Him Who is from the beginning.”

Now, in these final verses of this paragraph, John makes it clear that he is also writing to them to warn them about those who were trying to “deceive them.” This both sums up the current paragraph and forms a bridge to the next section of the epistle in which he continues to admonish them, and us, not to be deceived (3:7).

The word “deceive” in English carries with it a specific motive of someone who is purposefully intending to perpetrate a lie and present it as the truth. However, the Greek word in our text, which is translated as “deceive,” is *πλανᾶω* (*planaō*) which can also carry the sense of “wander” or “to take the wrong way.” Thus one can be “self-deceived,” meaning that one takes the wrong path but is not aware of doing so. Indeed, deception, by its very nature, is that condition when one is certain he or she has chosen the way of truth when in reality they have erred and followed that which is false.

It is very likely, then, that those who were trying to “deceive” the recipients of John’s epistle were not seeking to persuade them to accept something they knew was false. Rather, they were quite convinced that they had the truth and that they were therefore doing a favor to the community to which John writes, to turn them away from John’s gospel message (which in their minds was false teaching) and toward the truth as they defined it.

This very admonition which John gives in these verses pertains directly to believers in every era. False teachers who are themselves deceived and think that their errant teaching is actually the genuine truth are the best at persuading others to follow them in their errant ways. We see this in current trends in our day and even particularly in the current “messianic movement.” Self-appointed teachers, often who

have very little if any biblical training, find novel (even if unwarranted) interpretations of the Scriptures, form new doctrines and practices, and persuade others that their insights are true and gain them as followers of their errant concepts and teachings.

Thus, those who are “trying to deceive you” (περι τῶν πλανώντων ὑμᾶς) are those who have denied that Yeshua is the Messiah and who are offering what they consider to be substantial arguments to sustain their anti-messiah perspective.

Yeshua warned us that such would take place in the eras subsequent to His ascension:

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” And Yeshua answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will mislead many. (Matt 24:3-5)

*As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you* – What, then, does John offer as the means by which such deception can be known, avoided, and even exposed and defeated? Clearly it is to know the truth as God has revealed it to us, and to apply the truth to our lives as the Spirit Himself gives us His divine direction. Here we see that though the anointing they have received enables them to stand against deceptive teaching, it is still required that they prepare themselves and be ready to do spiritual battle with the deceivers in order to expose their lies.

As John has already noted in v. 20 of this chapter,<sup>1</sup> the “anointing” which they have received is the very presence of the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, Who indwells every believer, guides them, empowers them, convicts of sin and purifies them, and strengthens them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Yeshua, so their lives are more and more conformed to Him.<sup>2</sup> Primarily, the work of the Ruach in this anointing is to apply the truth of the Scriptures to the life of the believer so that God’s ways more and more become the pattern in all areas of the believer’s life. Thus, it must become the regular practice of the believer to

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1 See the remarks on v. 20 above for a more full exposition of the “anointing” as the presence of the Spirit in the life of every believer.

2 Note John’s references to the Ruach HaKodesh in the latter part of this epistle: 1John 3:24; 4:2; 5:6, 8.

constantly be feeding upon the word of God, for it is the word of God in the heart of the believer that the Spirit uses to lead, protect, strengthen, and mature one's life of faith.

This is precisely what Yeshua promised to His disciples in describing the work of the Spirit to establish the truth:

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 that I said to you. (Jn 14:26)

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. (Jn 16:13)

Paul emphasizes this same truth in regard to the Ruach Who indwells every believer:

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Messiah, he does not belong to Him. If Messiah is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. . . . So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom 8:9–10, 12–14)

*and you have no need for anyone to teach you;* – This statement must obviously be understood and interpreted with the immediate context. John is not teaching that once a person comes to faith and is thereby endowed with the indwelling Spirit of God (Ruach Elohim), he or she suddenly knows everything necessary and is no longer in need of teaching. Indeed, John, in writing this very epistle, is functioning as a teacher for those who were to receive it. Rather, what John is emphasizing is that in the core issue of Yeshua, that He is the Messiah promised and prophesied by Israel's prophets, the one and only Son of God and Savior of sinners, they need no one to teach them this core truth. For not only have they fully received this teaching from John and others, they have likewise demonstrated that they have been born again by receiving the truth about Yeshua and committing themselves to Him in faith.

In fact, the words John uses here are reminiscent of the language of