

Sunday School Lesson .....The Ending of the Study on  
The Work of the Holy Spirit Lesson # 50 God's Warning to His Children About the Spirits

When we started the study on the work of the Holy Spirit forty-nine lessons ago; we had no compass, calculator, or concern about its length until its completion. Our human conscience wanted to stop at lesson forty-five as we thought that completed the work. But the Holy Spirit reminded us that the gifting of the Holy Spirit upon God's children came on Pentecost; fifty days after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask God to give us fifty lessons on the Work of the Holy Spirit. In our own heart and mind lesson forty-seven turned out to be a hinge pin lesson discussing "the earnest" payment God gave us of a better inheritance to come in eternity. The next three lessons were primarily in defense of this missed point of doctrine (the earnest payment); missed at least on me (I had never heard of the "earnest" payment doctrine).

We have now arrived at lesson fifty which turns out to be a bridge to our next topic for Sunday School; The Coming Anti-Christ.

The verses that connect The Work of the Holy Spirit to our next session or series of lessons on "The Coming Anti-Christ are:

- *1st John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*
- *1st John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

In the first verse which we shall discuss in a later section of this introductory lesson we are warned that "the Holy Spirit" is not the only spirit loosed in the world. More of that later.

Our initial discussion is the second verse (1st John 2:18). I have underlined two separate phrases in the scripture. We deal with the last underline first: whereby we know that it is the last time:

John identifies the presence of "many antichrists" as the primary evidence that this final period has begun. This is a key "first mention"(anti-christs), coming in about 90 to 92 A.D. John dies soon after this by being thrown into a vat of hot oil. Upon until this time there has been no mention of "anti-christ(s) anywhere in the Bible. Deamons, spirits, false prophets yes....but not "anti-christ(s).

### Key Interpretations of "The Last Time"

Scholars and commentators generally interpret this phrase in three ways:

- The Church Age: Most conservative commentators view the "last hour" as the entire period between Christ's first and second comings. In this view, the era is "last" because it is the final phase of redemptive history, and no major biblical event remains before Christ's return.

- **The End of the Apostolic Age:** Some believe John was referring specifically to the closing years of the 1st century. As the original apostles died and heresies (like Gnosticism) increased, John signaled that the "pure" apostolic era was ending.
- **A "Final" Moral Crisis:** Others argue the term "hour" emphasizes the character of the time rather than its literal duration. It describes a decisive season of spiritual conflict and deception where the true gospel is openly challenged.

In this author's mind the first mention refers to The Church Age as:

- **The End of the Apostolic Age** came with the death of Paul who was beheaded outside the Gates of Rome. John had been under the protection of Constantine; actually living under the watchful eye of his own daughter. John, believing the Holy Spirit had no further work for him to complete after writing 1, 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> John refused the Emperor Constantine order to work writing other epistles with Julian the Apostle (who named an Apostle by Constantine.....John did consider him so since he was not named by the Lord Jesus). Constantine gave John ten days to re-consider. He did not so John was thrown in a vat of boiling oil. This ended the Apostolic Age as John was the last Apostle to die.
- A "Final" Moral Crisis wasn't final.

Thus John was revealing in the Holy Writ of Scripture for the "first" time *"there were many anti-christs"*. John would write the shortest book in the Bible; The Third Epistle of John which is only 219 words long and 15 verses just before his death.

Why the Presence of "Antichrists" is Evident to John in 1st John 2:18

John uses the appearance of "many antichrists" to prove his claim about the end time of the final stage or redemption; The Church Age.

- **Fulfillment of Prophecy:** Believers had been taught that the Antichrist would come at the end time. John explains that the "many antichrists" (those who deny that Jesus is the Christ or has come in the flesh) serve as forerunners to this final figure, confirming that the world is in its final "hour".
- **Manifestation of Deception:** The "last time" is characterized by people leaving the church to spread false doctrines. John points to these "secessionists" as concrete proof that the predicted era of intense spiritual testing has arrived.
- **Urgency and Vigilance:** By stating "we know" it is the last time, John urges his readers to be vigilant, rely on their "anointing" from the Holy Spirit, and hold fast to the foundational truths and Doctrines of the gospel.

We are the current readers being encouraged to be vigilant by John; thus by the Word, in the first verse of trying every spirit:

- *1st John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

1 John 4:1 is a foundational New Testament command regarding spiritual discernment. Basic instructions to believers to maintain a healthy skepticism toward spiritual claims rather than accepting all teachings at face value.

In *1 John 4:1*, the command to "try [test] the spirits" serves as a vital call for spiritual discernment, instructing believers to investigate the source of any teaching rather than accepting it blindly.

### The Greek Meaning of "Try" (Dokimazo)

The term translated as "try" or "test" is the Greek word dokimazo. This word carries specific connotations from the ancient world:

- **Assaying Metals**: In a literal sense, dokimazo was used for testing the purity of gold or silver, often through fire, to separate genuine metal from dross or counterfeit materials. (Key word is *purity*)
- **Marketplace Scrutiny**: Authorities in ancient marketplaces used this process to verify that coins were not counterfeit, giving the public confidence in their value. (Key word *counterfeit*)
- **Positive Intent**: Unlike the Greek word peirazo (often used for tempting or testing for failure), dokimazo implies testing with the expectation of a positive outcome—proving something is genuine so it can be approved and held fast. (Key word *testing, tempting as in true*).

### Why the Test is Necessary

John provides a clear reason for this rigorous scrutiny: "*many false prophets have gone out into the world*".

- **1st John 2:19** *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*

John is referring to a specific group of false teachers who had recently defected from his local community of believers. He identifies them as "many antichrists" who had appeared to be part of the church but eventually revealed their true nature by departing. Who Were They?

- **Apostate Teachers**: These individuals were originally members or even leaders within John's audience in Asia Minor.
  - The "Antichrists": In the preceding *verse (2:18)*, John labels them "antichrists" because they actively opposed Christ through false doctrine.
- **Heretical Groups**: Historically, they are often associated with early forms of **Gnosticism** or the teachings of Cerinthus. Their primary error was **Christological**: they denied that Jesus was the Christ who had come in the flesh. The primary teaching was that the earth could not have been created by a perfect God as the world was not perfect. Secondly they taught Jesus was a mere man who the Spirit of Christ descended upon at time; but ascended from Jesus before he was crucified.

### Why John Says "They Were Not of Us"

**John uses their departure to make a theological point about spiritual authenticity and perseverance:**

- **Inward Reality vs. Outward Association:** Though they were physically present in the church, they were never "truly of us," meaning they lacked genuine faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- **The Proof of Departure:** John argues that if they had truly belonged to the community of faith, they would have remained. Their leaving was a divine "unmasking" that made it plain they never shared the same commitment to apostolic truth. John claim was proven out by their false teachings.
- **Reassurance for the Church:** By explaining that these deceivers were never "of us," John reassures the remaining believers that the group's departure was not a loss of true brothers but a *necessary purging of false influence*.

### **The Meaning of "Us"**

**The Apostles:** Some scholars interpret "us" as specifically referring to the apostolic circle. In this view, these teachers went out from the apostles' authority to spread their own doctrines. These were the beginnings of the "anti-christs" a new breed of bad seed.

Primarily assaults upon the Church established on the day of Pentecost were done by the spirits loosed in the world which were demonic; these are counterfeit Christians who infiltrated the Church to learn the teachings. They were mostly of the Greeks who long believed the key to eternal life was knowledge which turned mortals into "gods" when the highest plateau of knowledge was reached. This is and introduction of a new breed of "spirits" and the beginning of splitting "one mind and one accord" from within the Church itself.

**These groups caused the greater damage to the Apostolic Church by:**

- **False teachings about Christ**
- **False teachings about Knowledge**
- **False teachings about Worship**