

Briefing Document: 1 John Lesson 46, Christians and Antichrists

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Executive Summary

This briefing synthesizes an analysis of 1 John 2:19-27, focusing on the fundamental distinctions between true Christians and "antichrists." The core argument is that genuine believers are identifiable by a set of defining characteristics rooted in their relationship with divine truth and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

True Christians are primarily defined as those who are **not deceived**, who **accept the true faith**, and who **abide faithfully** in Christ. This steadfastness is attributed to an "anointing" from God—the permanent, internal presence of the Holy Spirit—which functions as a divine teacher and a "built-in lie detector." This anointing provides believers with all necessary truth and power, negating the need for external, "deeper" knowledge offered by false teachers.

A central theme is the absolute and exclusive nature of biblical truth, governed by the law of non-contradiction: something cannot be simultaneously true and false. Consequently, any teaching that contradicts Scripture, such as denials of Christ's deity or atoning death, is a lie. This understanding mandates an intolerance of theological error, rejecting postmodern relativism and inter-faith dialogue that attempts to find common ground between truth and falsehood. True believers are called to persevere and remain grounded in the gospel they first received, an effort empowered by the Holy Spirit that demonstrates the reality of their salvation and their claim to the promise of eternal life.

Core Characteristics of a True Christian

According to the analysis of 1 John, a true Christian is identified by three primary, interconnected characteristics that contrast sharply with those of antichrists.

- **They Are Not Deceived:** While a genuine Christian may experience periods of testing, questioning, or doubt, this does not equate to denial. Their foundation in the truth, established at salvation, prevents them from being ultimately misled by false teachings.
- **They Accept the True Faith:** This is described as the "essential ingredient" in their not being deceived. To be saved, one must know and believe the truth. This acceptance is not a one-time event but a foundational posture.
- **They Abide Faithfully:** True Christians remain, continue, and stay faithful to the truth they received from the beginning. This perseverance is the external evidence of their internal reality. As stated in 1 John 2:27, the anointing they have received "abides in you," which is why they do not defect. This culminates in the promise of eternal life, as seen in verses 24-25: *"Therefore 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. And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life."*

The Anointing: The Role of the Holy Spirit

The key to a Christian's ability to discern truth and remain faithful is the "anointing" received from Christ, which is identified as the indwelling Holy Spirit. This spiritual endowment makes believers independent of human wisdom and false teachers.

The attributes of this anointing are:

- **Source:** It proceeds from Christ.
- **Nature:** It is internal, residing within the believer.
- **Permanence:** It abides forever, as Jesus promised in John 14:16, *"The Holy Spirit will abide with you forever."* This permanence is also described as the "seal" of redemption, a guarantee of salvation mentioned in Ephesians 1. This seal is referred to as the *aroba'n*¹—a pledge or down payment.
- **Sufficiency:** It provides all that is necessary for spiritual life. As 1 John 2:27 states, *"you do not need that anyone teach you."* This means believers do not require a special class of teachers to reveal hidden or "deeper" knowledge.
- **Function:** It is edifying, teaching believers "concerning all things" as they study the Word of God, of which the Spirit is the author.
- **Genuineness:** It is true and "is not a lie." The Holy Spirit does not mix truth with error.

The Nature of Truth and the Imperative of Intolerance Toward Error

A foundational argument presented is that biblical truth is absolute, exclusive, and incompatible with error. This has significant implications for how believers engage with differing viewpoints and religions.

The Law of Non-Contradiction

The text emphasizes the logical principle of non-contradiction, which states that something cannot be both true and false at the same time. John applies this in 1 John 2:21: *"I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth."* Because they possess the truth through the Holy Spirit, Christians have a "built-in lie detector" that allows them to identify and reject falsehoods, such as claims that Jesus is a created being or did not die on the cross.

The Exclusivity of the Gospel

Christianity is presented as utterly exclusive, rendering all other paths to God invalid. This is supported by key scriptures:

- John 14:6: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*
- Acts 4:12: *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

This exclusivity demands a rejection of postmodern relativism, where individuals claim their own subjective "truth." The concept that all views, opinions, or religions are equal is deemed unacceptable. Truth cannot be determined through dialogue with those who promote error. Believers are commanded to be intolerant of falsehood and are warned against fellowship with it, as outlined in 2 Corinthians 6. The text strongly warns against attempts to find "common ground" with error, citing 2 John 9-11, which instructs believers not to even greet false teachers, lest they participate in their "evil deeds."

Theological Frameworks for Sanctification

To illustrate how alternative or "deeper" truths have been presented historically, the source contrasts two movements focused on Christian holiness:

Movement	Core Beliefs & Characteristics
Keswick "Higher Life" Movement	Originated in Keswick, England (1875). Emphasized a "second crisis experience" of total surrender for a victorious Christian life, summarized as "let go and let God." It saw sanctification as a distinct experience after salvation, where believers overcome their "carnal" state by faith. Its proponents, like Oswald Chambers and Hannah Whitall Smith, often used allegorical interpretation to unveil "secret knowledge" in Scripture.
Wesleyan Perfectionism	Taught by John Wesley and central to denominations like the Wesleyan Church and Church of the Nazarene. Believes Christians can attain a state of "perfect love" in this life through a "second work of grace." This is not flawlessness but a heart perfected in love for God and neighbor, free from the <i>will</i> to sin, achieved through God's grace and human cooperation.

These movements are presented as examples of the many themes that have appeared in Christianity, but the central "truth of the Spirit" is held as the unchanging standard.

The Clarity of Scripture for Salvation

The document cites the Westminster Confession of Faith to affirm that the essential truths for salvation are clearly revealed in Scripture. This doctrine counters Gnostic ideas that spiritual knowledge is reserved for a select few.

"Yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other that not only the learned but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them."

This clarity means that denial of central scriptural teachings is not due to intellectual difficulty but to spiritual blindness caused by sin and Satan.

The Believer's Responsibility to Persevere

While believers are eternally secure through the sealing of the Holy Spirit, this divine guarantee does not negate human responsibility. Christians are called to actively persevere in the faith.

- **The Command to Abide:** John explicitly commands his readers, *"let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning."* Believers must make a conscious, Spirit-empowered effort to hold on to the truth of the gospel.

- **Perseverance as Evidence:** This act of continuing in the faith demonstrates the authenticity of one's salvation.

- John 8:31: *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed."*

- Colossians 1:23: Paul states that they have been redeemed *"if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard."*

- **The Goal of Perseverance:** By holding fast to the truth, believers remain in communion with the Son and the Father, securing the promise of eternal life.

Conclusion: The Fundamental Distinction

The lesson concludes by summarizing the stark contrast between antichrists and true Christians and issuing a call for self-examination.

- **Antichrists:** They depart, they deny, and they deceive.
- **True Christians:** They are not deceived, they affirm the faith, and they remain faithful.

The ultimate question is one of allegiance. As Jesus stated, "*He who is not with Me is against Me.*" Individuals face a choice between the narrow gate of Christianity and the broad way of the antichrists.

Glossary of Greek Terms

Term	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition from Source Context
<i>aroba'</i> ¹	(not provided)	A pledge, guarantee, deposit, or down payment.

¹ Footnote: This term is used in the context of the Holy Spirit being the "seal" of redemption (Ephesians 1).