

## THE CHURCH IN AN ANTICHRISTIAN WORLD III CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAST DAYS I (I JOHN 18-28)

A second characteristic of 'the last days' is immense spiritual blessing which comes in stark contrast to the great satanic onslaught of the spirit of antichrist. This was promised in the Old Testament. Notice the "*but ye*" (Vs. 20) contrasting not only the contending spirits of the age but also the individuals in the Church. These are days specifically in which the Spirit of the Lord will be pro-active in propelling the Church forward against the gates of hell (Matthew 16:18).

In these verses John identifies three possessions of the Church that give assurance that the Church will triumph over the antichrists (Vs. 18-19) in the last days; an unction from the Holy One (Vs. 20), that they had heard from the beginning; i.e. the Word (Vs. 24), and a promise of eternal life (Vs. 25).

### 1. THE SUBJECTIVE UNCTION FROM GOD

John speaks to the individuals in the Church and tells them that they have been given this unction. The Spirit of God that is dwelling in them and working in each of them individually and teaching them; leading them into all truth (John 16:13).

#### a. THE INITIATION OF THE SPIRIT

The word is  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$  (chrisma) and it emphasises that with which they have been anointed; i.e. the Spirit *from* the Holy One. This word marks the inseparable connection between Christ and his people, between the Head and the body. To be in Christ without receiving His Spirit is absurd. John is saying here that every Christian is anointed and enabled for the task of being a Christian in this antichristian world. In I Peter 2:9 and Revelation 1:6 the offices of Priest and King are attributed to the believer. Here we see that that third office is attributed to the believer, the office of Prophet and by so doing John identifies the believer with Christ inseparably and indissolubly.

#### b. THE ILLUMINATION OF THE SPIRIT

This Spirit anointing is not manifested by an extraordinary experience or sporadic excitement. This is manifested first by a knowledge of the truth (*cf.* John 16:13) and by a constancy in that truth (I John 2:24).

If we take the Authorised Version translation of Vs. 20 "*Ye know all things,*" we need to be careful how we interpret it. This is not an all-conclusive or an exhaustive statement. This does not mean that every Christian knows all spiritual knowledge. This knowledge is confined to the subject treated here (Calvin). Another difficulty in this passages arises in Vs. 24: "*Ye need not that any man teach you.*" What is it that John is saying then? The answer is found in the contrast that we noted in an earlier study in Vs. 20 "*But ye...*" John is speaking here to those who remained in the Church because they had this anointing in contrast to those who left the church because they had not. The same contrast is seen in I Corinthians 2:12-14.

### 1. THE OBJECTIVE WORD OF GOD

If we could trace the problem of the Church today and diagnose one single malady as the source of modern trends in the church it would be that the Church has departed from the authority of God's Word. John does not write to inform these Christians of some new and novel attraction but to remind them of "*that which they have heard from the beginning*" (Vs. 24).

Truth and error are polar opposites ("*no lie is of the truth*" Vs. 21) and John focuses on that great master-falsehood; the denial of Jesus Christ, which involves the loss of the Father (Vs. 23). The slogan of the New Evangelicals in England in the 1950's was "Co-operation without compromise," and the maxim of the New Evangelicals in America at the same time was, "the one badge of Christian discipleship is not orthodoxy but love." These statements are contrary to the spirit in which John writes here. John makes it clear that we are not only to identify error but we are also to identify the proponents of error. Notice the pronouns in V's. 22, 23: "*who*" "*whosoever.*"

### 2. THE ETERNAL FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

In Vs. 25 John mentions the promise of eternal life, not as a prize to be gained (although this is the emphasis of other passages) but as the foundation to build on. John is telling the Christians here that eternal life is a present reality (Romans 6:11 *cf.* I John 5:11). The antichrists may rise and fall before that great man of sin and son of perdition be revealed but this life in Christ will stand forever. The Christian then is one who lives in the eternal reality; in the reality of eternity.