

The false teachers that John is combating in 1 John

One of the main reasons why John wrote 1 John was to combat the influence of false prophets on the congregation to whom he was writing.

He refers to them in several passages in 1 John. These passages also give us an idea about the specific nature of the heresy the false teachers were promoting.

We know this from several passages, including:

1 John 2:18-24

18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, **even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.** 19 **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.** 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 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. 22 Who is **the liar** but the one who *denies that Jesus is the Christ?* This is the antichrist, *the one who denies the Father and the Son.* 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

And again:

1 John 2:25-27

This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

26 **These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.** 27 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.

And again:

1 John 3:7-9

Little children, **make sure no one deceives you**; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 *the one who practices sin is of the devil*; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9

And again:

1 John 4:1-6

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many **false prophets** have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: *every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God*; 3 *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God*; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

As far as **audience**, John's heart in writing the epistle was for the believers who were disturbed by the false teachers and were questioning basic things about their Christian beliefs.

At the same time, he realizes that there were in all likelihood still a group of unbelievers in their midst who were intending to spy out their liberty in Christ.

So he is sending out a warning in the form of basic tests to identify the behaviors that mark born again believers in contrast to behaviors that mark unbelieving false teachers.

That would serve both to expose any false teachers and arm the congregation.