

**Step One:  
Clearing Away Some Misunderstandings**

Some misunderstandings have arisen about John's assertions that believers "know ... the truth," "have no need for anyone to teach (them)," and are taught "about all things" by this anointing. Some have understood these statements to mean that by virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit they are able to know all truth by direct revelation from God, and therefore have no need of any other teachings, including those of Scripture! This understanding is completely false, since God himself, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, has "breathed out" Scripture so that "the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Others have understood these statements to mean that by virtue of the indwelling Spirit of God, they are able by themselves to understand all things recorded in Scripture, and therefore all human teachers are unnecessary and undesirable, including those pastor-teachers whom Christ has given to the Church! This understanding is partially false, since Christ has given gifted men to His Church for "the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." (Eph 4:11-12).

If these misunderstandings are either wholly or partially false, then what can John's statements mean? What can he mean when he says that by the anointing of the Holy One the children of God know "the truth"? He is probably referring to those truths concerning Christ and His salvation which John had communicated to these believers, and those truths which they knew from the Old Testament (e.g., that Jesus was the Christ or Messiah, as specified in 1 John 2:22). By the anointing which they had from the Holy One, these believers had a spiritual understanding of these truths. They knew the truth.

But what can John mean when he says that the anointing which is remaining in them teaches them about "all things," and that they have no need of any man to teach them? Here we must make a distinction between an infallible divine Teacher and fallible human teachers. The pastor teachers whom Christ had given to His Church are needful, but are fallible and human. They can be of great help to believers in their understanding of Scripture, but they can also be mistaken, and they can sometimes mislead the people of God. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is