

# So That You May Know

## An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1John**

### Chapter 2- John's Declaration **1John1:1-4**

#### 10. The Person of Jesus Christ Part 6

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WAOY Wednesday 04/18/07; WOSM Wednesday 10/08/08; WOSM Friday 10/14/22

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse “journey” through the Epistle of 1John and today we are going to continue to look at “The Declaration of the Apostle John” as listed in **1John 1:1-4**- so let's read those verses again together.

**1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life —**

**2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us —**

**3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.**

**4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.**

Now on the last broadcast, we were exploring just why John went to such great lengths in these first four verses in describing his own personal contact with Jesus. John didn't write what he wrote simply to draw attention to himself- no, John was very carefully listing all of Jesus' human qualities here along with His Divine Qualities so as to effectively combat the heresy of Gnosticism that was attacking the Church late in the first century.

Now Gnosticism is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the heresy of the Judaizers. The legalism of the Judaizers was a synthesis of Pharisaical Judaism. It was an attempt to blend Christianity with the religion of the Pharisees. But Gnosticism was just the opposite. It was an attempt to blend pagan philosophy with Christianity.

While the Judaizers stubbornly clung to the past- the Gnostics completely threw away the past. The Judaizers and the Antinomians

attacked the Church from within, but the Gnostics attacked the Church from without. So in many ways- the error of the Gnostics was exactly the opposite of the error of the Judaizers. This shows us a pattern that we can gage today- that much of heresy swings from one extreme to the other.

While the error of both the Antinomians and the legalists was being defeated in the Church- they were defeated by the constant vigilance and patient teaching of the Apostolic Fathers of the Church- at the same time, the devil brought in another heresy which had to be dealt with- called Gnosticism- which had to be dealt with the same way.

But unlike the Antinomians and the legalists- ancient Gnosticism is a bit hard to define. It is about as hard to define as is the modern “New Age Movement”, which in fact is not new at all- but is simply just old fashioned paganism. But both ancient Gnosticism and the New Age Movement have a lot in common and are equally as hard to define. Both are complex religious systems and not simple. There is not one single New Age religion- there is a whole collection of them- and the same thing is true about Gnosticism.

There isn’t just one type of Gnosticism- there is a whole variety of Gnostic cults that sprang up in the first century and which are alive today.

Both Gnosticism and the New Age Movement suggest that Divine Wisdom lies hidden in deep dark mysteries that can only be revealed to certain “enlightened followers”, which is how they got their name- The Gnostics got their name from the Greek word, *gnosis*, which means “knowledge” or “to know”. Now while the Greeks were known for seeking after knowledge, this type of knowledge that the Gnostics sought after was not the knowledge of mathematics, or science, or architecture, but was an *experiential* knowledge of God and of the Divine or the spiritual nature within us.

Gnostics believed that true Salvation was *not* obtained through the shed Blood of Jesus Christ, but the Gnostics taught that true Salvation was obtained by “*receiving*” or by “*experiencing*” this hidden knowledge that is beyond what is revealed to us in Scripture and which ordinary people could not receive. The Gnostics believed and taught that the real Truth about God was buried in codes and elaborately hidden secrets that could only be revealed to the chosen few.

So if you think about it, Mormonism, Christian Science, and the New Age Movement are all modern forms of the ancient heresy of Gnosticism. All of these current false religions suggest that the real key to understanding Divine Truth; the real pathway to Salvation is buried in special “codes” or “keys” in mystical writings other than the Bible and which have to be “unlocked” or deciphered by special chosen people.

In the false “Christianity” of Christian Science that other book is called, *Science and Health with Keys to the Scriptures*; in the false cult of Mormonism, those other books are: *The Book of Mormon; Doctrines and Covenants*; and *the Pearl of Great Price*. All of these spurious writings are what they call- “other revelations of Jesus Christ” which contain special information about Jesus that is not found in inspired Scripture.

In the NEW Age Movement- this special knowledge comes from a variety of sources- namely an “inner light” that “guides” the Gnostics into what they call “divine truth”. All of these things are classic Gnostic ideas.

Gnosticism has its beginnings in worldly philosophies and then migrated into the Christian Church while the Church was developing. This is why John uses the language that he does to describe his own personal contact with the physical Person of Jesus Christ.

You see, even in the early church, there were some who thought it was a good idea for Christians to adapt themselves to worldly philosophies and to try to blend in with the lost world. So these deceived people welcomed Gnosticism with open arms.

Gnosticism had the ability to mutate itself into various forms so that as one version of Gnosticism was defeated by the faithful watchmen of the Church- another form would rise to take its place. This is why in many of the Gnostic writings that we have uncovered, you can see the hostility that the true Church had for these people and the disdain in which the Gnostics viewed the Church.

We need to understand that the Christian Church back then didn't view the Gnostics as friends. They didn't look at the Gnostic as being sincere but misguided souls. No, the Church viewed the Gnostics as being the enemies of the Cross and as ungodly people who were trying to pervert the Gospel and working very hard to destroy the Christian Faith.

And at the same time, the Gnostics looked down their noses at the Church in the pompous and self-righteous way that many liberals do today and they viewed the Church as being hopelessly naïve and they viewed the people of the God as being oppressed by the chauvinistic superstitions of the strong men who were the stewards of the House of God.

So we can see that this battle against Gnosticism was not friendly or gentle; neither was it laid back- but the battle against Gnosticism in the Church was waged heavy and hard by the men whom God had called to defend the Faith.

We can see that in the Bible account of this war, that it was primarily the Apostle John whom God used to defend the Faith against the heresy of the Gnostics. John wrote many things to combat their teachings and attempts at perverting the right way of the Lord.

After the Canon of Scripture was completed and the Revelation of God to Man was completed and the Bible was formulated, Gnosticism continued to plague the Church for another six hundred years.

When Gnosticism first arose- it took the Christian world by storm. And Biblical Christianity survived only because the Apostles -whom God had called to raise up the Church were willing to confront this heresy head on. I wish I could tell you that we have that same courage today in the Church, but the courage to buck popular opinion and to go against the wave of the plague of so-called tolerance in order to do and say and teach that which God has spoken is in very short supply today.

John was clear and brutal in his denunciation of Gnostic teachings and of the Gnostic heretics themselves. Under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, John wrote to the Church to tell them how to deal with those who followed Gnosticism in **2John 9-11:**

**9** Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

**10** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting;

**11** for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

John recognized that by reading what the Gnostics wrote and by listening to what the Gnostics said was going to deceive some in the

Church- so God inspired John to write this warning to the Church to not let the Gnostics into their home, nor give them a greeting.

I think that it is fascinating that if John were alive today- he would probably be visited by members of the local clergy association as they would try to get John to be more loving and kind to these sweet and sincere Gnostics. John would be rebuked as being divisive; hard; mean; unloving; unkind; unchristian and a host of other condemnations- all because he saw the clear threat of Gnosticism and spoke out correctly and forcefully against it.

What we have to remember here, my Christian brothers and sisters is that what John wrote here may well seem hard to us today- but it didn't come from man; this didn't even come solely from John- we must remember that John was moved upon by the Holy Spirit to pen this down and we need to fear God and we need to obey God's Word and we need to take heed to this apostolic command today.

It is precisely because of the heresy of the Gnostics that by the second century the Lord raised up men whom we know today as the "apologists". The word, "apologist" comes from the Greek which means: "to defend". So these apologists defended the Christian Faith against all attacks both from within and without the Church. Men like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Ignatius, Origen, and Justin Martyr. These men rose to fame because they fought eloquently against the heresy of Gnosticism.

So what I want to remind all of us is that if our understanding of Christianity is that we are not to defend it against attacks by heretics such as the Gnostics; that somehow to reject false teaching is somehow unchristian; that to stand against lies and subversion of Truth by the devil is somehow unloving or unkind or un-christlike- you have a warped understanding of historic and Biblical Christianity. The Bible is clear and the history of the Church is clear. We are commanded by Scripture to stand against all heresy. We are obligated by apostolic commands to reject any teaching from any man which isn't Biblical.

We not only have the right, but we have the responsibility to denounce and cry out against false teaching from any man; any church; any organization; any council; any one- including an angel from heaven if what they write or teach or say is contrary to the Word of God.

Listen to me, my dear friends, we are told to be gentle and loving to all men- even those with whom we disagree. But nowhere in the

Bible does it say or teach that we are to tolerate heresy. We are not to tolerate it; accept it; listen to it; or learn anything from it. We are not to accept heresy as simply being another opinion; or a disagreement; or a personal preference. Heresy, by definition is a lie- it is poison. It comes from the devil, who is the father of lies. Heresy is never meant to enlighten or inform. Heresy is evil and wicked and is blasphemy and poison to our soul. Heresy is designed to confuse and destroy the Church by corrupting the Doctrines of the Church.

The Gnostics were not simply people who looked at Christ somewhat differently. The Gnostics were evil wicked men then even as they are today. Those who played around with Gnosticism in the first century were deceived and those who play around with this Heresy today will be deceived also. So John was clear about denouncing Gnosticism and all false teaching and so should we.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our “journey” through the Epistle of 1John. May God help us all.

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