

So That You May Know

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

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

14. The Person of Jesus Christ Part 10

WAOY Wednesday 04/25/07; WOSM 10/14/08; WOSM Thursday10/20/22

Welcome again, my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse “journey” through the Epistle of 1John and today we are going to begin to at “The Declaration of the Apostle John” as listed in **1John 1:1-4-** so let's read those verses 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 to describe his own personal contact with Jesus by discussing the heresy of Gnosticism that attacked the Church late in the first century and which still plagues the Church today.

Now we studied last time how that there are three main branches of Gnosticism:

1. Dualism
2. Syncretism
3. Docetism

And on the last broadcast, we looked at Syncretism and today I want to see what the third branch of Gnosticism is, which is called, Docetism.

Docetism is the branch of the Gnostic error that teaches that Jesus was not a real human being. The Docetists taught that all “spirit” is good and all “flesh” is bad. So the Docetists taught that Jesus only *appeared* to be human, but was, in fact, nothing more than a “spirit being” who just *seemed* to have a human body.

Once again, many who serve the Lord today may not look at this as such a big deal, but it really is. Here’s why. If Jesus was not human, then He could not have been born of a virgin, and therefore, He was not Immanuel. If Jesus was not a real person, then He could not have been the seed of King David, which would mean that He didn’t fulfill the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies and that would mean that He really wasn’t really the Messiah after all.

If the Docetists were right and Jesus was not a real person, then He could not have taken upon Himself the sins of us all- so therefore- we are yet in our sins. If Jesus was not a real Person, then He could not have been tempted like we are in every point, yet without sin, and therefore, Jesus would have been no more righteous than we are. And if Jesus was no more righteous than we are, we have no way to become righteous in the Eyes of God and therefore we cannot pass through God’s Tribunal of our sins.

The Apostle John saw the seriousness of this error, and he wrote his Epistle to deal specifically with the error of the Docetists, who taught that Jesus was not human. Let’s look at what John wrote in **1John 4:1**

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.

Now John taught here that the people of God were not to be naive as it pertained to false prophets and those who would bring in heresy to the Church. He said that we are not to believe every spirit. We are not to listen to every person who speaks “in the Name of the Lord”. We are not to believe everyone who says that they have heard from God or who says that they have a word from God.

Now it is important to understand that John was not telling us to become cynical or suspicious. No, John was simply telling us that we are to put what people say and what people write and what people teach to a spiritual test. Let’s see what that test is in verse 2:

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

Now the Docetists had come into the Church and were teaching that Jesus was a spiritual concept and was not human. They were teaching that Christ didn't have a literal fleshly Body and that He had not really come in to the world as a human being. But the Apostle John was not content with simply letting them teach their false doctrine. John was not willing to allow these heretics come into the Church and deceive people. Unlike many today- John was very willing to break unity and fellowship with these people over this important issue of Doctrine. John says that these people were heretics and were not teaching the Truth.

John wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the only true Christians are those who believe and confess that Jesus has come in the flesh and who believe and confess that Jesus was a real human being who breathed air and who hungered and who had red blood in His Veins and Who lived and died and rose again. And by saying this, John was drawing everyone's attention to how important it was the Jesus was both God and Man. But John didn't stop here. He went on to say more about these Gnostic heretics. Let's read verse 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.

Now John makes some very powerful statements here about the Gnostic heretics of his day. John says that they are *not* of God- but that they are antichrist. Now according to the Evangelical Dictionary of Theology- *anyone* who fights against Christ – especially by teaching false things about Jesus personally or the Gospel- is an antichrist.

Now if John was alive today, I have no doubt that many people from the modern Church would go to him and try to get him to tone down his rhetoric. They would tell him that being Gnostic wasn't really as bad as he said that it was. They would remind John of how sincere the Gnostics were. They would list for John all of the noble and good deeds that the Gnostics were doing in the community and of how many widows and poor people the Gnostic had helped. The local ministerial association would gather around John and pray that he would be more

tolerant of those who disagree with him; that John could somehow be more loving and more Christian in his attacks against the Gnostics.

They would try to get John to be less concerned about Doctrine- after all- nobody wants or needs Doctrine anymore today- it's too stiff and dry and academic and after all Bible Study is boring anyway. It would be so much better if John would do less teaching and less preaching and less praying and less doctrinal instruction and have something more exciting in the Church like more singing. Maybe John could start a nice yoga class- I hear that that kind of service is well attended over in Smyrna; or perhaps we could form a gardening club or do pottery. The concerned pastors of Ephesus would try to get John to see that much learning had made him mad and that he needed to calm down and let his hair down and start being like the Church over in Corinth who had long ago abandoned the systematic study of the Word of God for more interesting and important things like puppet shows or a comedian to tell us a few jokes.

Obviously, John's association with men like Paul and Peter and Jude had really warped his sense of humor- because John didn't think that what the Gnostics were teaching was funny. He didn't think it was cute or sweet or innocent did he? No, the Holy Spirit had moved upon John to say that anyone who was teaching false things about Jesus was not of God and was fighting against the cause of Christ and was, in fact, antichrist.

Well, what do you know? So we can see that the error of the Gnostics was a big deal to John wasn't it? We need to pray that it becomes a big deal to us today. And we can see that none of the men that God used to raise up the Church thought that an attack against the Gospel or against the Person of Jesus Christ was just an innocent misunderstanding did they? No, heresy and false teaching and misrepresenting Who Christ is and what Christ did and saying, "Thus saith the Lord" when the Lord has not spoken and making up doctrine because it suites someone's fancy and twisting verse of Scripture was all viewed by the early Church as a serious and a real threat and every single man that wrote in the Bible said it was wrong and that it mattered and that it was a big deal.

And all of this is still a big deal today. If you were to analyze all of the attacks against Christianity today, almost every one of the attacks against the Christian Faith center around two areas:

- ✓ Who is Jesus?
- ✓ How are sinners saved?

These are the two areas that the devil attacked in the first century with the Antinomians and the Judaizers and the Gnostics; these are the two areas that the devil attacked in the fourth and ninth and sixteenth centuries with the Modalists, the Arians, the Pelagians, and the Socinians; and these are the areas that the devil attacks today. These two areas- the Person of Jesus- just who Jesus is, and how a man is saved are the very areas that John wanted to clarify so he wrote this Epistle to clear up any misconception that anyone could have about these two issues.

You know, it really blows my mind to see how many people today are so laid back and unconcerned about all of this. For a man to cry out against the heresy and the apostasy of false doctrine today is like plowing through rocks in the field. You are labeled unloving; unchristian; mean spirited; hard; cruel; fat and ugly. It is much easier to simply not bring this stuff up. But Paul and John and Peter and Jude did what they did because of three irrefutable facts. These men of God were willing to buck the consensus of their day; they were willing to go against the tide of compromise and the attitude of going along to get along; they were willing to day in and day out faithfully cry out against ungodly men creeping into the Church turning the Grace of God into something evil because they had literally seen Jesus Christ; and they had been changed by His Power; and they loved the people of God enough to tell them the Truth.

Each one of these men had looked into the Face of the Son of God. They had stared into His Eyes. They had been personally commissioned to go and tell. They had been handed the most precious commodity in all the universe- the Gospel of God – and they were told to love it; to learn it; to proclaim it; to teach it; to defend it; and to pass it on.

So now this Gospel is in *our* hands. It lays at *our* feet. And the Gospel will either be contended for and upheld and loved and proclaimed; and defended in our day- or else it will fall down and be trampled under the feet of evil men.

Just like it did in Paul's day- heresy is knocking at our door. Just like they did in John's day, men are creeping into the Church and teaching damnable lies about Jesus and about God and about Salvation and they are corrupting the Truth in the eyes and ears of the people of God.

I tell you that we all need to return to Biblical Christianity and we need to reject Gnosticism in all of its forms and we need to repent and return to our first love and we need to once again grab the horns of the altar and once again weep between the porch and the altar and we need to return to a time when the Church had a high view of God and a high view of Scripture and when the Church was the Light of the world and the City set on a hill and when the Church was the pillar and the ground of the Truth and we need to accept John's declaration and we need to embrace it and love it and defend it.

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.

© 2007- 2023 by Enjoying God Ministries, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America
Enjoying God Ministries, Inc. PO Box 147 Saucier, Mississippi 39574 www.covenantofpeace.net

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1996 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse **Journey through the Epistle of 1John**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.