

## 2 John

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2 John 1:7-9

Vs. 7

- John here harkens back to a familiar theme found in 1 John: the threat of outside teachers infecting the church with heretical doctrine, namely Gnosticism.
- To review, the Gnostics held that all matter, anything material was innately evil, including all people. To the gnostic only the soul was good and only the soul could be saved. The body was nothing except as a tool for evil. To the Gnostics then, Jesus could not have been a man, for all flesh and blood creatures are evil and Jesus as the Son of God could not be evil. So they taught that Jesus did not "come in the flesh", but was a spirit sent by God. Of course this strikes at the very heart of what it means to be Christian. If Jesus was only a spirit, then He could not die on the cross for me, could not be tempted as all people are tempted, or know what it means to suffer pain. The distance between God and humanity would remain. "Further", the Gnostics would say, "if the body was meant for evil and not to be saved, then whatever you do in the body is fine. Be as sinful as you like with your body, just make sure you your soul stays pure." Other than that, Gnostics were good people...right?
- In 1 John 4:1-3, John makes a strong statement on Vs. 7's point. First, for John perhaps his singular truth is found in John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Any spirit that denies that God's Son walked the earth in human form is a false spirit, both those who deny the humanity of Jesus or those who deny the divinity of Jesus. The Gnostics denied that Jesus ever came in the flesh, claiming that He was just a spirit. All other religions may have some parallels to Christianity, but none can say "the Word became flesh." Without the humanity of Jesus, He cannot be the example we are to follow. Without the humanity of Jesus, God cannot know our suffering or what it is like to be tempted and thus Jesus cannot be our High Priest, our Advocate. Without the humanity of Jesus, He cannot really be our Savior for He cannot spill His blood and die for my sins. Second, without the humanity of Jesus there can be no physical resurrection of the dead. Because He was raised bodily from the grave, Jesus is able to promise that we too will be like Him when we are raised. Without the humanity of Jesus, our bodies cannot be redeemed and can never be the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Without the humanity of Jesus, Christ cannot stand in the gap acting as a bridge between God and humanity. Without the humanity of Jesus, there is no real salvation and no Christian faith. As William Barclay puts it, "He *had* to become what we are to make us what He is."

Vs. 8

- “Watch yourselves”: The church must be ever vigilant, on the alert, because the consequences of failure are catastrophic beyond words. The “deceivers” John warns of saw themselves as being progressive, developing and taking the belief of the church to the next level. One of the common criticisms of the Greeks was that they were always captivated by whatever was new. So here comes a slick new teacher from out of town declaring that he has a new revelation from God that takes the Christian faith to new heights of wonder. They saw themselves as elevating the church. John rightly saw it as destroying the church. How is this possibly relevant to today? Look around! At the next national meeting of the United Methodists they will fracture into multiple pieces. At the next meeting of the Episcopal church, they too will have to deal with severe questions of survival. Virtually all of the mainline denominations are on life support. They have “lost what they had accomplished”. Why? Because decades ago progressives began coming into the church with new revelations and new teachings designed to accommodate contemporary culture. As one pundit has said, “the Mainline Churches have bent over backwards so far to accommodate the culture, they have fallen in!” Indeed, one can hardly tell many of these churches from the lost culture that surrounds them. In short, the battle that John was fighting is still the battle we fight today.

Vs. 9

- “Anyone who goes too far...”: The Greek word is *proagon*, meaning “to go on ahead”. In other words, beware of teachers and preachers who clearly have run ahead of Jesus instead of following after Him! These false teachers claimed to be progressive and advanced thinkers and being progressive and advanced in one’s thinking by itself is fine, except when it gets ahead of Jesus and breaks free of the tether to Christ. Once you’ve broken away from Christ and His Way, you have broken away from God.
- Paul had the same concerns for the Corinthian church in 2 Cor. 11:1-4 (read).
- In the Seven Letters to the Seven Churches in the Revelation, the concluding message is that those who remain faithful to the end will be fully rewarded, (Rev. 2:7, 10, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21)
- For the true follower of Christ, our thinking on science, philosophy, civics, in every aspect of life, must be tied to the Way, the Truth, and the Life of Christ. All else is weakness, lies, and death. As Christians we are not free to believe whatever we choose. We are free to follow Christ.