

## 10. Learning to Recognize Deceivers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in truth and love. We saw that the book of 2 John was originally written to a Christian lady and her family. We also saw that she apparently was a lady who showed great hospitality to traveling Christians. However, some of those who took advantage of her hospitality were deceivers or false teachers. As a result, in our topic today, we will see the instructions that John gave to this lady so that she would not be deceived by these deceivers and false teachers.

In 2 John 1:7-8, we read, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward.” Here, we see that John begins to give his warning to this lady and her family about deceivers. The word translated “deceivers” means *one who misleads or leads into error* and is used four times in the New Testament. 1 Timothy 4:1-2 says, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.” Here, we see that many deceivers depart from the faith and turn to deceiving spirits and false teachings. We also see that such deceivers sear their consciences so that it does not bother them to speak lies to deceive others.

We also see that there are many such deceivers. These deceivers have gone out into the world to spread their false teachings. The first thing we see about such false teachers is that they do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. The Word of God teaches that Christ is fully God and fully man. 1 John 4:3 says, “And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” Here, we see that some false teachers teach that Christ was not truly a man. In John 10:30-31, we read, “I and *My* Father are one. Then, the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.” Here, we see that many try to deny that Christ is God and One with the Father. In this case, the Jews were ready to stone Christ because they understood that Christ was saying that He was fully God and they did not want to accept that fact. Deceivers will either deny that Christ is fully God, fully man or both.

John says that such a deceiver is antichrist or against Christ. As a result, any religious leader that denies that Christ is fully God or fully man is antichrist because such teachings are against Christ. John told the lady and her family to look at themselves with understanding to see whether they were being deceived by such false teachers. John wanted this lady to enjoy her full eternal reward for her faithful ministry of hospitality and did not want her to miss out on part of that reward because part of those who enjoyed her hospitality were false teachers. 1 Corinthians 3:12-14 says, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.” Hospitality to true teachers would certainly be rewarded but hospitality to false teachers would be burned up like wood, hay and stubble and would not be

rewarded. John wanted this lady to have a full reward.

2 John 1:9-11 says, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.” The word translated “transgresses” means *to depart, leave or turn from*. This word is used to describe Judas in Acts 1:25 where we read, “To take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” We know from John 6:70 that Judas never had a true faith. Here, we see that such individuals do not abide in the doctrine of Christ.

The word translated “abide” means *to remain or continue*. Here, we see that those who do not continue in the doctrine of Christ do not have God. This means that such individuals never placed their faith in Christ. 1 John 2:23 says, “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” As a result, these verses make it clear that a person claiming to believe in the Father but does not believe in the Son does not have the Father either. Such a person is not a Christian.

In contrast, the verse goes on to say that those individuals who continue in the Biblical teaching about Christ have a true faith in both the Father and the Son. The word translated “doctrine” means *the teaching about Christ*. In Matthew 22:31-33, we read, “‘But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.’ And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.” Here, the word is translated teaching and includes the doctrine of the resurrection. In Mark 1:27, we read, “Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’” Here, we see that the doctrine of Christ teaches that Christ has all authority over demons.

Christ also said in John 7:16-17, “Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*.’” Here, we see that Christ said that His doctrine came from the Father. In Acts 5:28, we see that the apostles taught this same doctrine about Christ. In that verse the Jewish religious leaders said, “Saying, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!’” A deceiver will not teach these doctrines of Christ.

John wrote to the lady and her family about teachers who do not teach these doctrines about Christ. The word translated “receive” means *to take to one’s self*. Paul told Agrippa in Acts 26:18 that Christ has sent him, “To open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” Here, we see that receive means to receive forgiveness of sins. John shared with this lady and her children that they were not to invite these false teachers to stay in her home and provide hospitality for them.

The lady was also told not to bid these false teachers God speed. The word translated “God speed” means *to rejoice or give a greeting*. Since John was writing about false teachers that deny the basic doctrines about Christ, John said that it was not proper to rejoice and give thanks for their ministry or to give them a greeting. In fact, verse eleven says that such things would actually make a person a partaker in the evil deeds of such false teachers. The word translated “partaker” is from the same root word as communion and fellowship and means *to enter into fellowship or to become a partner*. Ephesians 5:11 says, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.” When a false teacher denies the basic teachings of the doctrine of Christ, we are to share what the Word of God says about the things that the false teacher is denying so that people will know what the Word of God really says instead of being deceived by such false teachers and their teachings. This is a part of our ministry of protecting those who are weak or immature Christians.

The word translated “evil” speaks of things that are wicked or sinful in their nature. In fact, the word is used several times to describe Satan. Matthew 13:19 says, “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.” Here, we see that Satan works to keep people from even understanding the Word of God. The word translated “deeds” speaks of actions or works that a person does. 1 John 3:8 says, “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Evil deeds are the works of Satan; Christ came to destroy those evil works. As a result, those who encourage false teachers share in their evil works.

2 John 1:12-13 says, “Having many things to write to you, I did not wish *to do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.” Here, we see that John had many other things to write to this lady and her children. However, instead of writing those things in a letter, John hoped to come and visit this family and share those teachings face to face. He said that such sharing face-to-face would cause them all to experience a joy that would be full. The same is true in our own lives. As we share the Word of God with one another, and encourage one another, it also brings great joy to our lives.

As we read this short letter, we see that John took time to write a letter to encourage a family of his spiritual children. In the same way, we want to encourage both our physical and our spiritual children by letters and visits to encourage them in their spiritual growth so that they will also continue to grow in their spiritual lives. John also sent greetings from the nephews and nieces of this lady. This indicated that John had the opportunity to know other members of her family as well. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to recognize deceivers and false teachers.