

Abiding Fruit



John 15:16

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Winning a Full Reward 2 John 8

These words are taken from 2 John 8 where the Apostle John is urging his readers (“the elect lady and her children” – vs.1), to beware of the deceiver and antichrist (vs. 7). A deceiver or antichrist is described as someone who does not confess that Jesus came in the flesh. In other words, a denial of the incarnation is proof that a person is a deceiver or antichrist. John says that there are many deceivers in the world (vs. 7).

The Apostle John is concerned to correct false teaching that was making its way around the Christian Church, and this false teaching is in essence antichrist. In his first Epistle, the Apostle John seems to indicate in 1 John 2:18, that antichrist was a person who was to come in the future. He uses the noun in the masculine nominative singular form without the article, but since it is in this form, we can supply the article, thus making it “*the antichrist*”. John also uses the word to describe someone who denies that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22), and again he uses it in the same form as indicated above. John also indicates in 1 John 4:3 that any spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God, and this he calls the “*spirit of antichrist*.” This spirit of antichrist, he says, is both coming and already in the world at work (see 1 John 2:18; 2 John 7).

In 2 John, the Apostle is concerned about these false teachers that promote the heresy that Jesus did not come in the flesh. This heresy is the beginning form of what later became known as Gnosticism. Gnosticism lays great stress on knowledge, (a deeper mystical knowledge only known to a select few) but more particularly through the influence of Plato, it advocated and taught that spirit was good and matter was evil. This is dualism, and this worked itself out in the false teaching that was beginning to make its way around the churches, by saying that Jesus was some form of deity but he was not truly human. By denying the humanity of Christ, these false teachers said they were protecting Christ from evil.

This heresy would further develop into a Docetic form, meaning that Jesus’ body was not really physical but only “seemed” or “appeared” to be so. You can see that these definitions or explanations are contrary to Holy Scripture, and the Bible makes it plain and clear, that a denial of the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, makes a person a deceiver and antichrist (2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 2:22; Jude 4, see also Titus 1:16), under the condemnation and judgment of God.

Notice that John goes further in 2 John 9 and equates someone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, as not having God. What is the teaching of Christ? The teaching of Christ in the context of 2 John must refer to one’s belief concerning the Person of Christ, but this is further extended to mean a denial of His Person and Work, and a failure to be obedient to Scripture, and love one’s brethren (1 John 2:23; 3:6 – 10; 4:20, 21 ; 5:1 – 3). To “abide” in the teaching of Christ means that you remain constant adhered to this truth. As a spider clings, miraculously it seems, to any surface, regardless of position, so too we must cling to the truth and remain in it. The ramifications of not abiding simply are that such a person does not have God. They are therefore lost

and shall perish, unless they repent. In some cases, it is not possible to repent because they are apostate (Heb. 12:15 – 17; 2 Pet. 2; Jude 4, 10 – 13).

The person who abides in the teaching of Christ possesses both Christ and the Father (see John 14:21, 23). We are required to hold to a full, wholesome and biblical Christology (Who Jesus is and what Jesus has done) as revealed in the Bible. John is therefore urging his readers in verse 8 (this elect lady and her children - I think they are individuals, though unnamed), to take heed to themselves that they are not swayed by a false and unbiblical view of Jesus Christ. Why should they “*watch themselves*”? Firstly, because of the subtlety of heresy. It may appear acceptable, beautiful and sublime. Secondly, because it leads to only death and God’s judgment.

By watching ourselves, John is saying we will not lose what we have worked so hard for. What is that? Well, it is maintaining the confession of faith that we have confessed by mouth and works. John has commended this lady that some of her children are walking in the truth, and that this is obedience to the command of the Father (vs. 4). Walking in the truth is walking in love (vs. 5, 6), and walking in love is obedience to the commands of God the Father. This lady is doing this unlike the many deceivers who have gone out into the world with their false teaching and false view of Christ (vs. 7).

By watching ourselves, John says we shall win a “*full reward*” (vs. 8). This reward is determined by our adherence to the truth and our discrimination against those who promote false teaching (Col. 2:18, 19; 3:23 – 25). There is no middle ground here by John. Holding firmly to the truth of God puts us at odds with heretics. We do not say about false teachers, that because they may teach some truth, that therefore we fellowship with them on that basis. Remember, their heresy is an unbiblical doctrine of Jesus. You either hold firmly to a Scriptural view of Jesus Christ or you don’t. If you don’t, you are an “*antichrist*”, and if you promote your false view you are “*deceiver*” as well. There is no fellowship with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14, 15). To enlist on the side of false teaching is a serious offense. It means that if you are carried away by the errors of the false teacher because you don’t know better, that then your reward will be diminished, but it carries the further threat, that by being carried away, you run the risk of adopting that position and confessing it as truth, then you shall lose that reward, for you shall prove that you were never Christ’s to begin with. It is a serious warning against false teaching and false teachers. That’s why John says “*watch yourselves.*”

How does this work out practically? How do we watch ourselves? Notice that John says that we must not invite false teachers into our homes (vs. 10). Teachers in the 1st century traveled from place to place and stayed in the homes of believers. John states that if someone comes to your house and has these false beliefs, you are not to receive them into your home. I take this to mean that today. When false teachers come knocking at your door, and they deny the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus, then we have biblical mandate to not welcome them into our homes. This applies to all cults primarily. Both the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus. Do not welcome them, but rather reprove them and give them the Gospel. I treat other false religions differently, because they do not portray themselves as Christian, so I would invite someone like a Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish or Muslim person into my home though I recognize that they are unbelievers. It is those who intend to portray themselves as orthodox Christians that John has a problem with in verse 10. I recognize that this raises probably more questions, but if we stick to the text of Scripture primarily, it is not so difficult to apply. John says in verse 11, that even greeting someone carries with it a consequence of being a partaker of their evil deeds. It is no easy thing to be a discerning Christian. We must let the Bible only guide us, and not what we feel.

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