

2 John 7-9 | Staying in the truth
Redemption Hill Church | Tan Huai Tze
10th May 2009

2 John 7-9: ⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. ⁹Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

Introduction

1. About ten years ago, I was still at University in London. One day, I was having lunch with a friend in what we call the Junior Common Room. It was a place that you could get a sandwich, and sit down for a quick bite. Since ours was a city campus, and this was before September 11, people could walk in and out of our campus fairly easily. On that fateful day, a man who looked like he hadn't showered in a few months, approached us, and told us that he had a message from God for us. When he said that to us, we could see that his teeth were brown, and probably rotten, from lack of brushing. We said, "Sure!"

2. He took out a plastic folder, where he had stuck many hand drawn pictures. There was a picture of Adam and Eve in the garden, bright light representing God, then fire representing hell, then the cross, and what looked like Jesus. As far as we could tell, he was sharing the gospel with both of us. At the end of his sharing, we thanked him and told him, "*We believe as you do. In fact, we are members of the Christian Union and we attend All Soul's Church at Langham Place*". He gave us a somewhat frustrated look, like we had wasted a good part of his day.

3. We chatted a bit more, and then suddenly, as if to doubt our salvation, he said to us, in all seriousness, "*If you really believed in Jesus, you would sell everything you had, quit University and become like me*". You see he had sold everything he had, was living on the streets and spent all his time approaching people, and telling them what he had told us. And that to him was the mark of a true disciple. **How was I supposed to tell if this message he gave us was from God or not? How was I to tell whether or not this was sound doctrine or false teaching?**

4. When you encounter conferences, preachers, teachers, evangelists, causes, and movements, vying for your time, your attention and your money, whether they come here and appear 'live in Singapore', or whether they come to you via podcasts, websites, email, youtube, blogs, **How do you tell if their message is from God or not? How do you tell if what they are saying is sound doctrine to be embraced or false teaching to be rejected? For that matter, how do you know whether or not what I am about to tell you in this message is sound or unsound, true or false? Should you listen, or should you run?**

5. The recipients of 2 John were facing a very similar dilemma. You see there were traveling preachers and teachers who were coming to them bringing them 'messages from God'. John, an elder and a pastor was very concerned that they would be led astray by those who were deceivers and antichrists. He was so concerned that he was going to go to see them "face to face", as verse 12 tells us. In the mean time, however, the matter was so serious, that he sent them this letter, 2 John, to warn them in advance, and to tell them what to look out for.

6. Let's take a closer look at 2 John today to see what we can learn about pursuing sound doctrine and fighting false teaching:

1. We tell the truth with love (vs. 7)

7. Verse 7 says, “***For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.***” Now if you are reading the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, you’ll notice that it leaves out an important word in verse 7. This word is actually there in the original. It’s the word “*For*”. This word is important because it links verses 7 to 9 with verses 4 to 6. In verses 4 to 6, they are told to “walk in truth”, that’s in verse 4, and to “love one another”, that’s verse 5 and 6. The word “*For*” tells us that the reason they are to “walk in truth” and “love one another” is found in verses 7 to 9. They are to ‘walk in truth’ and ‘love one another’ because deceivers and antichrists were on their way.

8. Now, ‘Walking in truth’ is an obvious antidote to deception and false teaching. You combat deception with truth. But how is ‘loving one another’ an antidote for deception? It doesn’t seem obvious. Not until we realize that true love wants the very best for the person that is loved.

9. You see, there are people who are all about ‘loving’. They love everyone and everything. They love the old, they love the young, they love the good, and they love the bad. They love the skies, they love the seas, they love the mountains they love the valleys. They are all about love. If you are such a person, the question that John would like to ask you is, do you love people enough to tell them the truth, or do you just say what they want to hear so that they will like you? True love wants the best for the other person. Do you love like that, or is it all ultimately about you?

10. Then, there are others, like me, who are all about telling the truth. We are the type that love sound doctrine, that checks up everything said by the preacher against our own Bibles, we start blogsites, we lead homegroups, we teach Bible studies, we talk about “sound doctrine” and really don’t want anything to do with “false teaching”. If you are like me, then John is asking you, do you tell the truth out of concern for the other person’s well-being, or just to show that you are better than them? Do you speak truth to show that you are better-read, smarter or more eloquent, or do you tell the truth, do you bring the truth, for the other person’s benefit? Is it all ultimately about you?

11. Do we speak truth with a broken heart and tears in our eyes? If we really love people, we’d tell them what they need to hear, but we’d do it for their good, and in love. **We need to tell the truth with love** in our pursuit of sound doctrine. We need to get love in our hearts when we handle matters of truth. Loving one another in truth galvanizes us and protects us against false teaching.

12. Tradition has it that the Apostle John was in Ephesus in his extreme old age. He used to be carried into the congregation in the arms of his disciples, and he used to keep telling them, “Little children, love one another”. They got irritated after a while, and so asked him why he did that. He replied, “Because it is the Lord’s command, and if only this is done, it is enough”.

2. We confess Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man (vs.7,9)

13. But make no mistake, the deceivers and antichrist will be there. Who are they anyway? Now the word anti-christ means “against Christ”. Thus, anyone who opposes the true teachings of Christ, and thus oppose Christ Himself is an antichrist. They bring lies, so they are also known as deceivers. Verses 7 and 9, tell us a bit about what they are like.

14. From these verses, we see 3 things that they do that help us to identify who they are. They either (i) ignore Jesus, (ii) take away from Jesus or (iii) add to Jesus.

(i) They ignore Jesus – “do not confess... Jesus” (vs.7)

15. Verse 7 says that they “do not confess the coming of Jesus”. What does it mean to ignore Jesus? It means having a sense of spirituality and religion and salvation apart from Jesus. Now we think that this only applies in other religions, or philosophies, perhaps among New Agers. However, this is more common than we think, even among Bible believing Christians. The question to ask is this - is Jesus prominent in your spirituality? Is he at the centre of your Christianity?

16. Have you ever heard people saying that the Bible, **B.I.B.L.E.** stands for **B**asic **I**nstruction **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth? What that basically says is that the Bible contains a set of teachings to help you lead a good life, a religious life. The Bible contains principles for good conduct and behaviour. The Bible teaches us how to be successful! But Jesus said to the Pharisees in John 5:39-40, “*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is **they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life***”. The Pharisees had the Scriptures, but they did not have life! You can have the Bible, and still not get Jesus! The Bible is not **B**asic **I**nstruction **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth, the Bible is the written word of God that reveals to us the eternal Word of God, Jesus! Don’t read the Bible just to get nuggets of truth, nuggets of wisdom, or nuggets for success. We must read the Bible in a way that points us to Jesus. Otherwise, all we have is religion and spirituality, but we do not have Jesus, and we do not have salvation!

(ii) They take away from Jesus – “*do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ **in the flesh***” (vs.7)

17. Besides ignoring Jesus, another mark of an antichrist is that they take away from Jesus. Verse 7 says they do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Now, the exact heresy that John is writing against isn’t clearly explained. But it seems that these guys acknowledged that Christ was divine, but not that He was human. What is more common in our day is those that say Jesus was just a good man, even a prophet, a religious teacher or a sage, but NOT God. In both cases, they do not confess Jesus for who he really is.

18. The Gospel of John, opens with these words, “*In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” – Jesus is God! And it goes on to say in verse 14, “*The Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us...*” – Jesus is Man. The Bible teaches that Jesus is fully God and fully Man! Not 50% God and 50% Man, but 100% God and 100% Man. This is what we call the incarnation. But why is the incarnation important?

19. Because Jesus is **fully man**, He is one of us, and thus he could be our substitute. He could live the life we should have lived and die the death that we should have died. And when he rose again, that was our resurrection. Because Jesus is **fully God** – He is perfectly holy, and without sin. He is also the offended party in our sin against God, and thus He can absorb our offence into Himself and forgive us our trespasses. Take away Jesus as fully God and fully Man, and you take away the Gospel. You take away the Gospel, and you take away our salvation, and we have no hope. Don’t take away from Jesus.

(iii) They add to Jesus – “*gone out into the world*” (vs. 7); “*gone ahead and does not abide in the teaching...*” (vs. 9)

20. Besides ignoring or taking away from Jesus, some of them add to Jesus. Verse 7 says that they had “*gone into the world*”. Verse 9 says that they had “*gone ahead*”, and “*did not abide in the teaching of Christ*”, and thus “*did not have God*”. The scary thing is that this implies that the false teachers may have once been part of the life of the church. They may even have been leaders in the church. But, they had gone on ahead, and added to the teachings of Christ. These are people who add to Christ with their own philosophies and ideas. There are those that mix Christ with their own preferred beliefs.

21. Less you think this happens just among the pagans, this happens in Christian circles too, and usually comes in this form. They’ll say, “*Yes, we believe in Jesus like you do..., but if you really want to be blessed, to be spiritual, to grow in the Lord, to have your church explode at the seams, then you need to sign up for this programme, or experience this blessing, or*

travel to this place, or read my book (and it's yours for \$19.99) .” What they are saying is that to be really, really spiritual, you need that extra something beyond Jesus! They won't come out and say it like that, but by every other measure that is implied. And that my friend is heresy!

22. And it hits home, all too quickly. Now, some of us here, myself totally included, really like guys like Tim Keller, John Piper, Mark Driscoll, C J Mahaney, Don Carson, John MacArthur, Martyn Lloyd Jones, John Stott and the like. And these are really great and godly guys, who have really helped us with their preaching, teaching, books and example of Godly living and service. We've learnt so much from them, and we continue to learn from them, and we should. But, if they ever become a requirement for our salvation or for true spirituality, in this church and in our lives, they have become idols, and we have added to Jesus. This is a sober warning – You cannot add to Jesus without destroying the message of the Gospel!

23. Don't mess with Jesus. Take him for who he really is, as revealed to us in the Scriptures. Don't ignore him, don't take away from Him, and don't add to Him. Confess Him, as Jesus Christ, fully God and fully Man, the centre of our faith.

3. We need to be watchful (vs. 8)

24. So, in pursuing sound doctrine, we need love in our hearts, and we need to confess Jesus Christ for who he is. Verse 8 tells us that we also need to be watchful. *“Watch yourself”* (vs.8) John says. This tells us that there is no place for complacency in our walk with God. We must be discerning, diligent, active and alert.

25. False teaching is not always obvious, not everyone who comes in a nice suit, with a nice smile, shiny teeth and a sweet voice, who tells of personal success, or talks about spiritual things and religion, and heaven and hell is of God. Satan is more subtle and much smarter than that!

26. Thus, we must see and listen to everything through the filters of Scripture, and through the lens of the Gospel. Be careful with anything that replaces or even tends to replace Jesus Christ, as the centre of your faith. We need to be watchful.

4. We are pursuing our full joy in God (vs.8 – 9)

27. After looking at all that, you may still want to ask. What's the big deal with false teaching anyway? What's at stake? Verse 8 tells us that two things are at stake, (i) Gospel ministry and (ii) your full reward.

(i) Gospel ministry - *“...lose what we (you) have worked for”* (vs. 8)

28. Verse 8 says *“**Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward**”* But what exactly is this work? David Jackman explains it this way, *“All the hard work of evangelism, teaching and pastoral care to which the church leaders of his generation had given themselves so sacrificially”*. And he goes on to say this work *“would in the end come to nothing if the church in the next generation turns away from truth.”* What is at stake? The very ministry of the Gospel, to save and transform this generation and the next will be lost if we do not pursue sound doctrine, and if we allow false teaching to creep in. When you mix the pure gospel with lies, people are not going to hear the truth and be saved, people's lives are not going to be changed into the image of what God intended. People are not going to be set free from bondages, but are going to be enslaved to deception instead! So much is at stake, so much.

(ii) Full reward - *“...gain a full reward”* (vs.8).

29. And yet John is not done yet, he continues to exhort them to press on to *“gain a full reward”* in verse 8. What is this full reward? Firstly, what is it not. It is not your salvation. That

is secure in Christ. Verse 2 says that the truth, which is Jesus “**abides in us and will be with us forever**”. Our salvation is secure in Christ, you cannot lose it. So what is this reward? In fact this idea of reward is not prominent in John’s writings, and so we go to Paul to gain a fuller understanding of what John is writing about. Both of them are consistent.

30. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians Chapter 3, which I think gives us the clearest exposition of reward as separate from salvation. Reading from verse 14-15 “¹⁴*If the work that anyone has built on the foundation (the foundation is Jesus Christ) survives, he will receive a reward.* ¹⁵*If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*” So, this is God’s reward for the faithful work of building His church in this life.

31. What does the reward look like? Different parts of the Bible (see [Annex](#)) talk about this reward. With some help, I’ve drawn them together, and I’m just going to lay it out for you here:

32. The reward is **beholding the face of God, and the glory of Christ. It is sitting in judgment with Christ, and reigning with Christ, forever and ever. It is a crown of glory and a crown of life. It is the full inheritance of all things, with the saints in the light. It is an inheritance that is eternal and incorruptible. It is entering into the joy of the Lord, and the fullness of our joy. It is the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ. It is treasure in heaven, and an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. It is great, it is full, it is sure, it is satisfying, and it is beyond anything that we can imagine.**” It is glorious, but ultimately, what makes the reward rewarding, is **the person of God Himself**. 2 John Verse 9 says, “*whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*” When you abide in the teaching of Christ, you get God!

- a. Paul did not say, “I count all things as loss in view of the surpassing value of **money in heaven**”
- b. Paul did not say, “I count all things as loss in view of the surpassing value of **property in heaven**”
- c. Paul did not say, “I count all things as loss in view of the surpassing value of **power in heaven**”

33. He said, “*I count all things as loss in view of the surpassing value of **knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish***” Philippians 3:8. God himself is the reward of the reward!

34. Those of us who have tasted the gift of salvation have had our appetites whet for God Himself. We desire him, and we will pursue Him because He alone is eternally satisfying. **We are pursuing our full joy in God** when we pursue sound doctrine, and fight false teaching in this life. This is what is at stake! Don’t lose the gospel, John is saying! Don’t lose your full reward, he pleads with us!

Conclusion

35. In summary, these are the four things that we take into our hearts from the text:

- a. We must have love in our hearts as we pursue sound doctrine;
- b. We confess Jesus Christ, fully God and fully Man, as sound doctrine;
- c. We are watchful and careful in our pursuit of sound doctrine; and
- d. Our pursuit of sound doctrine is ultimately our pursuit of our full joy in God.

36. Our ultimate aim for pursuing sound doctrine is an un-obscured and clear vision of God through Jesus Christ that sets our hearts ablaze and transforms our lives. Pursue that because Christ Jesus has made us his own through the what He did for us on the cross. For from Him, and through Him and to Him are all things. Amen.

Rewards in Heaven

Adapted from:

so4j.com/eternal-rewards-in-heaven-for-godly-christians.php#rewards

- Fully beholding the Face of God (Psalm 17:15, Matt 5:8, Rev 22:4)
- Fully beholding the Glory of Christ (John 17:24)
- Sitting in Judgment with Christ (Dan 7:22, Matt 19:28, Luke 22:30, 1 Cor 6:2),
- Reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12, Rev 3:21, Rev 5:10, Rev 20:4),
- Reigning Forever and Ever (Rev 22:5)
- A Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:4)
- A Crown of Life (James 1:12, Rev 2:10)
- The Full Inheritance of All Things (Rev 21:7),
- The Full Inheritance with Saints In Light (Acts 20:32, Acts 26:18, Col 1:12),
- Inheritance that is Eternal (Heb 9:15)
- Inheritance that is Incorruptible (1 Peter 1:4)
- Entering Into The Joy of the Lord (Matt 25:21)
- Fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11)
- Prize of the Upward Calling of God in Christ (Philip 3:14).
- Treasure in Heaven (Matt 19:21, Luke 12:33),
- Eternal Weight Of Glory Beyond all Comparison (2 Cor 4:17)
- Great (Matt 5:12, Luke 6:35, Heb 10:35)
- Full (2 John 1:8)
- Sure (Proverbs 11:18)
- Satisfying (Psalm 17:15),
- Inestimable (Isaiah 64:4, 1 Cor 2:9)