

Have You Been Seduced?

1 John 2:24-29

With Study Questions

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I. Abiding In The Son And Father

“Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life ²⁶ These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to deceive you.*” (1 John 2:24-26).

What’s At Stake?

Before we examine that to which John calls his readers in terms of action, let us examine what hangs in the balance. This we see in verse 25 with the words, **“And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.”** It is John’s desire that those under his care would be confident and unashamed before the presence of their Savior (verse 28.) So the initial question must be asked, “How can we be secure in knowing that we are recipients of the precious promise of eternal life?”

The Seducers

We learn from verse 26 that there were people (somehow associated with the church) who were trying to seduce (KJV), or deceive the flock. These types of people have been and, to a certain extent, will always be a thorn in the flesh of the church. In the last four weeks alone I am aware of at least three occasions where our own church members have had to contend with the L. A. Church of Christ, Christadelphians and a Messianic Christian/Jewish sect which claims to acknowledge the authority of the scriptures yet at the same time considers the concept of Jesus being the Christ a mediaeval concept. In a handout given to me a couple of weeks ago I quote, **“The reader is encouraged to relinquish the inaccurate mediaeval picture many have of Yeshua (Jesus) as The Christ.”**¹ Compare this to the very chapter we’re studying, verse 22, **“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.”** People are easily deceived and don’t think you are immune. We must always be on guard.

History has produced a never-ending flood of cults, sects, para-church organizations and assorted anti-Christian dissenters that being, as Calvin states, **“...not content with Christ, they have had a hankering to wander beyond the**

¹ Author Unknown, *The Source*, (Publisher Unknown), p. 1.

simple doctrine of the gospel.”² It is for this reason that John writes and that we study. To avoid being seduced from the pure doctrine of Christ.

John writes to keep the church free from something which would rob those who considers themselves to be part of the covenant community from their final destination. In this John does not deny the perseverance of the saints (that is, that genuine salvation is truly eternal and cannot become forfeit) but counts on it as we shall soon see.

Abide In What You Heard, Abide In Christ

So how can we be secure in knowing that we are recipients of the precious promise of eternal life? John tells his readers, **“Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.”**

Knowledge Of Christ, In Christ

Let us first point out that there is no separating the knowledge of the person and work of Christ from being in Christ. It has been said, **“They in whom God’s truth remains, remain in God.”³** Someone might argue, “What about children or the mentally disabled?” To this I would have to say that to the extent that the mind is able to produce proper thinking, the saved mind will produce proper thinking regarding Christ.

Ordinarily speaking, the saved person should and will grow in their proper understanding of Jesus. In this small epistle John has already addressed the doctrines of the incarnation and propitiation. Of course we realize that merely understanding the concepts of the incarnation and propitiation does not save a person. And being confused about theological concepts doesn’t mean someone isn’t saved. But one who has a fully developed mind and understands, but rejects these concepts, is most certainly unregenerate (not saved.) As we shall soon see, John fully expects the truly saved reader to embrace the doctrines he has taught as obviously true.

Remedial Christianity

But another question must be asked. Is this exhortation true for all Christians? Specifically, abiding in what you *first learned*? I am about to teach a six week class on eschatology (science of last things.) I am calling it *Beginning Eschatology*. But due to popular errors surrounding this subject (including ones I held myself at one time) I have been tempted to entitle the class Remedial Eschatology (‘remedial’ meaning to correct a deficiency.) And although I want

² John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries, Volume XXII, 1 John* (Baker Book House, reprinted 1993), p. 199.

³ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries, Volume XXII, 1 John* (Baker Book House, reprinted 1993), p. 198.

to avoid a false sense of humility I must say that a huge percentage of my own Christian growth, in all subjects, is remedial. And quite frankly most of my efforts in the instruction of others is remedial as well.

Antiquity Alone?

Now that I have insulted us all, what is the answer to my question? Just because you have been taught something from the beginning⁴ doesn't make it right. How impossible would this be since there are so many who name the name of Christ who have contradictory beginnings. If one group of Christians are taught from the beginning that Jesus is not the Christ and another group of Christians are taught from the beginning that He is the Christ they can't both be right. As Gordon Clark states, "**Since God is rational, and not insane, truth forms a completely logical system.**"⁵ If anybody ever says to you (as one seminary professor I heard of said), "**That is good logic but bad theology**" He has the devil as his tutor. A contradiction is a lie and the father of lies is the devil (John 8:44, same author.)

The Apostle's Teaching

It is a difficult, yet necessary, thing from time to time to depart from what we have once been taught. It has been aptly put that if we were "**unwilling to depart from that doctrine which we have once embraced, whatever it may be, this would not be perseverance, but perverse obstinacy.**"⁶ What we must realize is that what John's readers learned from the beginning was declared to them from John himself (1 John 1:3.) The closest I can think of anything resembling uniform agreement among Christians today is belief in the Bible as the word of God. And even this doctrine, which at one time was so undisputed among Christians that it is rarely mentioned in the early creeds, has been under siege by false teachers in the church.

The Value Of Creeds

We must understand John's word to mean the message delivered by apostolic authority. Study, discrimination, humility, prayer and a willingness to be instructed must be exercised. Then be perseveringly inflexible to the extent that you have come understand the timeless truths of scripture. Here the ancient creeds and confessions are exceedingly valuable.

⁴ Whether beginning means the beginning of your personal faith or the beginning of your denomination. The churches addressed in scripture were about as "beginning" as you could get, yet there was still doctrinal error. Believing in the teachings of the church father simply because they were only a generation removed from the apostles is not a basis for sound doctrine. Sola Scriptura.

⁵ Gordon Clark, *First John* (The Trinity Foundation, 1980), pp. 85,86.

⁶ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries, Volume XXII, 1 John* (Baker Book House, reprinted 1993), p. 198.

Contrary to popular opinion, the creeds and confessions of Christendom aren't designed to add or subtract anything from scripture. The design of ecumenical creeds and counsels is to address errors that have become prevalent in the church. The five points of Calvinism which was the result of the synod of Dort was a response of the error of Arminianism. The Westminster Confession was largely a response to Roman Catholicism. The early creeds of the first five centuries responded to false teachings regarding the deity of Christ and the trinity and so on.

Teachers From All Ages

Teaching is a designated office of the church. God, in His loving care for His children provides teachers and He has for the two thousand years of the new covenant. It is nothing less than gross negligence on our part to merely use the teachers of our own generation and ignore those gifted through history. Especially when we consider how they have fully addressed so many of the same errors which surround us today. Of course confessions are not coordinate but subordinate to scripture. Their value is refuting error. And although they are not to be regarded as divinely inspired I have little doubt that if modern evangelicalism were to allow itself to be catechized by these time-tested documents, we would all come to realize that much of what we believe is simply not what was taught from the beginning.

II. Do We Need Teachers?

But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (1 John 2:27).

What It Can't Mean

I believe the anointing can be equated to the teaching and embracing of Christ by His Spirit. This is something John assumes of true believers. Surely apart from this John's words would fall on deaf ears. It must be understood that when John says that you don't need that anyone teach you, it cannot mean what it seems to mean at first glance for why would John even be writing the letter and why would God provide teachers.

False Teachers, New Teaching

A couple of things John might mean here. As Kistemaker states, **“The believers have no need of deceivers who try to teach false doctrine.”**⁷ Certainly they don’t need that. Today there are so many para-church teachers leading members of Christ’s church in so many confusing directions. This is certainly not necessary. John also may be implying that the former knowledge they had been taught through the apostles and embraced by the anointing of the Spirit was sufficient as we see John doesn’t present hitherto unknown doctrines in his epistle. In short, here John is encouraging his readers to continue in the faith they were first taught. A faith which has been the consistent theme of scripture since the very beginning, even Genesis.

III. How Christians Behave

“If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him” (1 John 2:29).

Having already discussed verse 28 I will finish with the end of the chapter. John presents a simple condition and a logical conclusion. The condition is knowing that God is righteous. The conclusion is that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. It might be more easily understood if put, “Everyone who is born of God does good.” The point here, as John has and will continue to make, is that any understanding of the Christian faith which teaches that a concerted effort toward righteous living is unnecessary is simply not the teaching of scripture.

Conclusion

I guess I must ask the questions, “Do you see yourself moving in a direction where your understanding of the scriptures, and therefore your Savior, is on the increase? Is the same Spirit who revealed the truth of the scriptures to you in the first place bringing you into a deeper understanding and therefore deeper maturity in your faith? Or have you hit an impasse? And if you have hit an impasse, why? And if you are not growing in your understanding of the faith you first embraced, what has become your new doctrine? Have you been seduced from hungering after Biblical Christianity to another system of thinking and what is it? Does it grant everlasting life? And if you can answer all these questions in a Biblically accurate way, is it evident in the conduct of your life?”

⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *James, Epistles of John, Peter and Jude*, (Baker Books, 1987), p. 285.

Questions for Study

1. What is John's desire for his readers according to verses 25 and 28?
2. With what type of teachers will the church always contend?
3. What are some ways you see the modern church being seduced?
4. How can believers know they are the recipients of the precious promise of eternal life?
5. Can you separate the knowledge of Christ from being in Christ? Explain.
6. Explain the concept of "remedial" Christianity.
7. Is something right simply because you have been taught it from the beginning?
8. How do you know if something is right?
9. Explain the value of creeds and confessions.
10. Do Christians need teachers?
11. Can Jesus be Savior and not lord?