

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John 4:12**

Chapter 20- God Dwells in Us

190 God Dwells in Us- Part 1

WAOY Tuesday 05/20/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" of the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to begin to look at what John taught about "God Dwelling in Us"- so let's read **1John 4:12** together:

No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Now this is one of the most interesting verses in this entire Epistle. On the surface- it appears that John is changing directions and is moving *past* his discussion about us loving one another from verse 11 and is giving us some general information about God- like the fact that God is invisible.

But we have to remember, dear friends, that John is writing this Epistle as an *ongoing* discussion about how we are to live as believers. You see, Christianity is not just about believing that Jesus Christ died on the Cross- but Christianity is also about how we as believers should live and how we should act towards those who are lost and those who are our brothers and sisters as a result of believing that Jesus died and rose again.

So being saved and serving Jesus Christ is all about us being *continually* conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. Now when I say that – please do not think that I am teaching that we are to become "gods"- we are not- that is a false teaching. Human beings never have and never will be Deity. There is God and then there is us. We are different. God is the Creator and we are part of His Creation.

We are not God and God is not us. It is wrong to assume that if only we try hard enough we can become gods and it is also wrong to think that God is nothing more than a glorified Man. That is Mormonism- *not*

Christianity and Christianity is *not* Mormonism and never will be and Mormonism is not Christian.

Christianity teaches that we are all sinful by birth and while God is not obligated to save anyone- He is gracious and merciful to save *some* of us. And Christianity teaches that after we are wondrously saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone- we are then commanded to “do good works”. And part of those “good works” is that we ought to love one another.

So therefore Christianity- or serving God- is all about you and me understanding what it actually means to be a Christian and then being conformed to fit that definition.

Now the American culture is a very *individualistic* culture that celebrates individualism and rejoices over “doing our own thing.” And one of the greatest problems that we face in the modern Church is the mindset brought about by this extremely individualistic culture that says that Christians have the license to “do what is right in their own eyes.” Serving God “in our own way” has become the mantra of many people today and we are bombarded with hundreds of different “styles” or “ways” in which we can all serve God.

It is popular for people to say, “*Well, that’s your interpretation*” when confronted with Divine Truth that we don’t like as though what we think about what God says actually matters. Many Bible Studies are conducted with this concept in mind today. Many times, people go to Bible Study and they sit around in a circle and they look at a particular verse of Scripture and then they go around the room allowing each person to give their own personal “take” on what that verse “means to them”. Then personal experiences; clever slogans; and human ingenuity are given to emphasize how they feel.

But with all due respect- it really doesn’t matter what you or I think about a verse of Scripture. And so it doesn’t matter what that verse means to us. All that matters: is what that verse meant to God as He moved upon the writer to pen it down.

We are expressly forbidden in Scripture to *ever* place our own private interpretation on anything that God said. Read with me what the Apostle Peter said about this very issue in **2Peter 1:20**:

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation,

So we have to come to grips with the reality that Christianity has *already* been defined and it has *already* been established and it has *already* been clearly delineated and clearly articulated and clearly spelled out for us because God supernaturally allowed all of His Divine Revelation to be written down by over 40 men who lived on four continents over a 1500 year time frame. And God did this in such a way that every single Word is perfect and without error and completely trustworthy; and utterly flawless.

And over the years, God empowered men to risk death and to endure torture and to suffer unbelievable persecution so that they could translate that inspired inerrant, infallible Revelation of God into the English language so that we may have God's Word in our own tongue.

And so God expects us who live in the 21st Century to respect and value what He said enough to order our lives to the point where we *make* time to read and study and understand the most important Book on earth.

And here's why this matters. All that we know about God that is true is found in that one single Book. All that we know about what God loves and what hates is in that Book. All that we know what God expects from us and what He demands of us and what He forbids us is in that Book. And all that it means to be a Christian; what it means to actually serve God- how we are to live; what we are to embrace; what we are to shun; what we are to agree to and what we are to reject has been clearly and carefully laid out for us.

And we are told in that Book not to add anything to it; we are told not to take anything away from it. We told not to reinvent it; we are told not to try to improve on it; we are told not to try to make it more appealing; and we are told not to be ashamed of it.

The Book is perfect; it is just right; it is finished; it is complete; it is entire; it is full; and it is just exactly the way that God wanted it to be. God doesn't have a speech impediment; God doesn't stutter; He is not dim witted or slow of speech. God said what He meant and He meant what He said and we are commanded to bow our knees to its Authority.

And so as we study God's Word and we find out that something that we said or something that we taught or something that we believe is at

odds with this Book- then let God be true and every man a liar – we are wrong and God is right and we should immediately confess our sin and repent and accept what God has said to be true.

We have to remember that Church was God's idea- not Man's. The Church is not an invention of Man- it is a creation of God and the Church belongs to Jesus Christ- He is the Head of the Church because He bought and paid for it with His Own Blood. So because that is true- we don't have the right or the authority to "do" Church in the way that we see fit.

We have to "do" Church in the already spelled out and prescribed way that God has already established for us in Scripture. And to operate the Church in violation of what God says or to operate the Church in disregard to what God says is not being creative and flexible- it is being rebellious and sinful.

Someone told me recently that the Church belonged to the people. But that is absolutely false. The Church does not belong to the people. It does not belong to the Pastor or the Elders or the pope or the Cardinals. The Church belongs to Jesus Christ and everything done in the Church; every song; every sermon; every Bible Study; and every activity should be done to the praise and the glory and the honor of Jesus Christ.

Likewise when you say that you are saved- that doesn't mean that now you have a license to live as you choose because now you are "free". No, you have been bought and paid for by the Lord Christ and you are a real sure 'nuff slave- who lives for no other reason other than the Glory of our Master- Jesus Christ.

This notion that I hear all the time about us coming to Jesus so that we can "be all that we can be" or so that we can "fulfill all our dreams" or so that we can become great in the earth and be made much over cannot be found anywhere in Scripture. Now that may be real good Humanism or real good psychology- but it is real bad Christianity and it is real bad theology.

We don't come to the Cross to become great. We come to the Cross to die. And that is the end of us- right then and there. And from that second on- we are now legally and spiritually and in reality- bond slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And a slave has no rights whatsoever over their own bodies. They have no ambitions or dreams that are personal. They have no say so

over their future and they have absolutely no control over what the Master wants to do with them.

So when somebody says that they are saved and serving God- that is the same thing as saying that they are a slave who obeys God. Because you cannot serve God without obeying God. There is no such thing as loving Jesus and not loving what Jesus said. And there is no such thing as loving what Jesus said if you do not obey what Jesus said.

And there are no exceptions to this. Recently someone called me to tell me that because they were saved- that they now have the mind of Jesus Christ. Well, I certainly agree with that- but I knew that they were up to something so I asked them to go on. So then this person told me that since they had the mind of Christ- they had been set free from the “bondage” of having to obey the Bible. This person told me that God had given them a “superior revelation” to the Bible and that they could now do what they felt led to do- even if what they did was in direct disobedience to the Word of God.

So I quickly informed this dear soul that they were deceived. I told them that being led by God’s Spirit is not a license to do whatever you have an urge to do. Being led by God’s Spirit is the same thing as being obedient to what God has already revealed to us in Scripture. Anything that we do that is “in the Spirit” is not some mystical esoteric or emotional experience that varies from person to the next. No, doing anything “in the Spirit” is simply doing or obeying what God has already said in Scripture.

For example- “Praying in the Spirit” is praying in accord with Scripture; “Walking in the Spirit” is conducting our daily lives in humble obedience to Scripture. And I have no idea what “Laughing in the Spirit” is supposed to be about because I can’t find that anywhere in Scripture to begin with.

When you are spending your entire life trying to hear some “new thing” or trying to get a “new word” or trying to receive a “new revelation” you are testifying that the already existing Word and already existing Revelation is not adequate. And that means that you see the already existing Word and Revelation to be somehow lacking; that it is somehow deficient and is not all that God wanted to say. Because the only reason to look for something else is because you’re not satisfied with what God has already given and that, beloved, is the height of arrogance- not spirituality.

This is the very same sin as the children of Israel committed in the wilderness in **Numbers 11**, when God did so much for them but they lusted after more. They didn't have to plant or harvest their food- but God rained down manna every morning and these sinful rebellious people ate angel's food but it wasn't good enough for them, so they cried out for flesh. And God gave them flesh and He sent them quail and they ate quail until the wrath of God was kindled against them because they did not appreciate what God had already given to them and the Bible says that they died while the flesh was between their teeth.

And I tell you that God has already given us the greatest and the best manna of all- the Bread of God- the Word of God and we already have it; and we can hold it in our hands; and we need to take heed to ourselves that we do not lust for more and that we are satisfied with what God has already given to us; and that we are content with what God has already spoken; and that we are grateful and thankful for the Revelation that we already have.

And I pray that we will show our appreciation for what God has spoken and we will show our gratefulness for what God has given by reading what God said and by studying what God said and by learning what God said and by loving what God said and by obeying what God said and by defending what God said and by not trying to change it and by not trying to add to it or take away from it or by being ashamed of it.

Serving God means understanding God and it means understanding what God expects and what God demands and it is being conformed and it is coming into alignment with what God has already defined that being a Christian actually is. And the only source of that understanding that exists on earth is the Holy Bible and so serving God is nothing more than lovingly and humbly and graciously and joyfully bowing to the authority of what God said and doing it and John says here that loving each other is part of that.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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