

Beware of Deceivers

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2 John / 2 John 7

INTRODUCTION

1. We are looking again today at John's second letter written to the "chosen lady and her children"
2. Today we are looking at verse 7 which says, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist."
3. Jesus said in [Matthew 7:15-17](#), "15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit."
4. These teachers, Jesus said, are "false prophets"
5. They look like shepherds but they are "ravenous wolves"
6. Their fruit gives them away to their true identity
7. Verse 17 calls them "bad trees" that "bears bad fruit"
8. False teachers have always been a danger to the church
9. Paul said in [Acts 20:29-31](#), "29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."
10. John like Paul warns his readers
11. He told them in his first letter in [1 John 2:26](#), "These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you."
12. This group that was trying to deceive them did "not confess Jesus" (4:3) as coming "in the flesh" (4:2)
13. They are "not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist" (4:3)
14. John identifies this same group in [2 John 7](#) as "deceivers"

15. So John now moves from the charge in verses 4-6 to the warning in verse 7
16. He begins his warning in verse 7 but the conjunction “for” looks back at verse 6
17. “For” (hoti) is a causal particle
18. It is subordinate to the verb περιπατήτε (*peripatēte*) at the end of v. 6, giving the reason why the readers should walk in the commandment to love one another (NET Bible Notes)
19. It can be translated “because”
20. It is a purpose word
21. John wanted the chosen lady and her children to “walk according to His commandments” (v.6) by “lov[ing] one another” (v.5) “because many deceivers have gone out into the world” (v.7)
22. So when John says they were to love one another, this love was limited to the saved, the chosen of God who acknowledges Jesus as coming in the flesh
23. This love, therefore, is a call for discernment to those they were showing hospitality to
24. Since Satan comes as an angel of light ([2 Cor. 11:13–15](#)), they needed to be on guard against those itinerant preachers who taught heresy and “be united in truth and love so that they will not follow the false teachers who are denying the humanity of Jesus” (Mangum)

· John begins verse 7 by first talking about...

LESSON

I. Their Number (v.7a)

“For many”

- a. The word “many” (*polus*, adj) means “a large but indefinite number”
- b. It is used some 375 times in the NT and is translated by terms such as “great” as in magnitude or quantity or “large” in [Matthew 8:15](#) referring to the size of a crowd
- c. Jesus used this word in [Matthew 24:11](#), when referring to false prophets. He said, “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.”
- d. Scripture teaches there are “many demons” ([Mk.1:34](#)), “many false witnesses” ([Mat.26:60](#)) and “many [who] were demon possessed” ([Mt.8:16](#))
- e. D. Edmond Hiebert says this the use of *polus* (man) “indicates that they constitute a widespread movement and present a real danger to believers.”

· Next he gives...

II. Their Identity (vv.7b-e)

He doesn't hide who they are but exposes them. John did that in 3 John when he named a heretic named "Diotrephes" who did "not accept what we say" (v.9)

Paul also named names:

He confronted Peter and Barnabbas when they were acting like hypocrites with the Gentiles [Gal.2:11-14](#), "11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

He urged "Euodia and...[Syntyche](#) to live in harmony in the Lord" in [Philippians 4:2](#).

He told Timothy in [1 Timothy 1:3-4](#), "3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, 4 nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith."

Obviously Timothy knew who the "certain men" were

In [Titus 1:12-13](#), quoting one of their own prophets, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons. This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith"

In [Acts 5:3-4](#) and verses 8-9, he confronted Ananias and his wife Sapphira about lying to the Holy Spirit and both dropped dead

We should name names today:

T.D. Jakes believes in modalism which therefore rejects the Trinity

Modalism is the doctrine that believes that the persons of the Trinity represent only three modes or aspects of the divine revelation, not distinct and coexisting persons in the divine nature (Oxford)

John MacArthur says, "You can't be a non-Trinitarian and believe in a God who's not a trinity such as *T.D. Jakes* and people like that and be a Christian."

Justin Peters, in his apologetics ministry gives the names of false teachers and states on his website that he focuses "on teaching the sufficiency of God's Word and exposing the false teachings of the prosperity, health and wealth gospel" ([Justinpeters.org](#))

There are books like "Christianity in Crisis" and "The Agony of Deceit" that were written for the purpose of exposing false teachers

If we were going to “beware of false prophets,” then we need to know “who” they are

> John does the same when he says in [2 John 7...](#)

a. They are deceivers (v.7b)

i. This is why they are dangerous and needed to be watched

ii. Instead of loving like believers, they “deceive”

iii. “Deceive” is the Greek word *planos* from which we get the English word *planet*

iv. The word literally means “a wanderer” (MacArthur)

v. In the ancient world the movement of the heavenly bodies was mapped and studied (*zodiac*). The stars fit into stable patterns, but some stars (i.e. planets) moved irregularly. The ancients called them “wanderers.” This developed metaphorically into those who wander from the truth (Utley)

vi. It characterizes them by their basic activity as intentionally seeking to deceive and lead astray the unwary (Hiebert)

vii. They are so dangerous because they “lead to wrong action, and not only to wrong opinion.” (Westcott)

viii. They cannot rest until they have ensnared others in their error (Hiebert)

ix. These are those who wander from the truth of Scripture; who corrupt it; who lead others astray from it; who are imposters (Paul called such people “false brethren” in [2 Cor. 11:26](#) and [Gal. 2:4](#); cf. Jude’s description of them as “wandering stars” headed for the “black darkness” of eternal judgment [v. 13]). (MacArthur)

x. Scripture is full of warnings about them:

1. In the Olivet Discourse Jesus predicted that in the end times “false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect” ([Matt. 24:24](#)).

2. Paul called them “savage wolves” ([Acts 20:29](#)); “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” ([2 Cor. 11:13](#)); servants of Satan who, like their wicked master (v. 14), “disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds” (v. 15).

3. The apostle told Timothy that “the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” ([1 Tim. 4:1](#)).

4. In his first letter John pleaded with his readers, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that

does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.” ([1 John 4:1–3](#))

b. They have gone out into the world (v.7c)

- i. John used this same phrase in [1 John 2:19](#), “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”
- ii. Verse 7 shows where they went - “into the world”
- iii. [Kenneth Wuest](#) said, “The verb is aorist, speaking here of a particular crisis in the first-century Church when these false teachers suddenly broke with the saints in matters of doctrine, and went forth teaching heresy.”
- iv. [Lenski](#) says “into the world” means far and wide in the world, wherever they find Christians”
- v. They are “on missionary assignments” (Utlely)
- vi. They were like Demas, who ministered with others like Luke ([Col.4:14](#)), Crescens and Titus ([2 Tim.4:10](#)), Mark and Aristarchus ([Phile.1:24](#)), in [2 Timothy 4:10](#), “for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted (enkataleipō, aor.act.ind. “to leave behind, to forsake, abandon”) me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.”

› John says their specific heresy is...

c. They deny the incarnation (v.7d)

John says, these deceivers are “those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh”

- i. They did not deny the existence of Jesus
- ii. They denied the biblical Jesus and had “all kinds of pagan, Jewish, and quasi-Christian systems of thought” (MacArthur)
 1. They taught that matter was inherently evil and spirit was good
 2. They did accept some form of Christ’s deity, but denied his humanity
 3. They didn’t think He could have taken on a physical body since matter was evil
 4. They also believed a secret esoteric (which means only understood by a few) knowledge was the source of salvation. Only those considered special were to have it (Wikipedia, biblestudy.org)
 5. In the 96th issue of the Christian History Magazine entitled, “The Gnostic Hunger for Secret Knowledge,” it says, “All matter (the world and the body) is evil and has its source in an evil creator who fell from and betrayed the true God. This lesser, inferior divine being arose through some mysterious tragic split with the ultimate

realm (the Pleroma or “fullness”) of the ultimate God, who is often called the Father of All.

Some forms of Gnosticism believed that this split in the deity produced an extensive array of intermediary beings (archons, principalities, and powers, many of whom are given names like Yaldabaoth, Sakla[s], and Barbelo) who inhabit the cosmos between the Pleroma and the earthly realm.

Gnostics believed that humanity is trapped in the material world/human body. The creator seeks to mislead humans by keeping them blind to the spiritual reality of the ultimate Father of All. In order to provide salvation, the ultimate God sent a redeemer, who navigated the journey from the Pleroma through the intermediary beings to earth. In some Gnostic texts this redeemer is Seth (drawing on the positive presentation in [Genesis 4:25](#), [5:3](#), and 6:2–3), but the majority of Gnostic texts have Christ as the redeemer. Because the material world is evil, Christ only appeared to be human (this belief is called docetism and is condemned in [1 John 4:2](#)). Gnostic books like *The Second Treatise of the Great Seth* therefore deny that Christ died on the cross.

Christ provides salvation by delivering secret revelations/discourses to his true followers; it is this knowledge that is crucial. The saved are a special spiritual group of humanity (the Pneumatics) who “know” the folly of the material world/body and understand that in a “spiritual resurrection” they will be united with the Father of All. These “elect” have a divine spark (or spirit) of the ultimate God inside them, which is rescued through the secret revelations given by the redeemer. In many Gnostic texts, the salvation of the true spark is an ascent through the intermediary beings back to the Pleroma.”

iii. They denied the humanity of Christ

1. They denied that He came in the flesh (1 Jn 5:1). They could not conceive of the fact that Jesus was both truly God and perfect man.
2. John says they “do not acknowledge” (homologeō, pres.act.part.), means, “to agree with” someone as to a certain teaching. (Wuest)
3. These teachers were not in agreement with the doctrines of the Church. They not only did not admit them to be true but differed with them by teaching heresy. (Wuest)
4. D. Edmond Hiebert says the negative word “not” in the phrase they “do not acknowledge” “with the present-tense participle portrays their practice of openly avoiding a direct denial of the incarnation, but they were subtle enough to counterfeit that basic apostolic teaching through the teaching they brought. What a professed Christian teacher deliberately refuses to acknowledge in dealing with doctrinal matters may be just as revealing as what he openly rejects.”

› John again says they are “deceivers” and adds...

d. They are antichrists (v.7e)

- i. “Antichrists” is a term that “refers to a principle of evil, incarnated in men, who are hostile and opposed to God” (MacArthur)
- ii. When John says “this” is who they are (deceiver and antichrist), he uses a demonstrative pronoun (houtos, “this one”) to stress “that this is the true identity of every individual belonging to this group. The definite article [is] with both nouns... [and] stresses that he personally embodies the characteristics conveyed by both of these terms” (Hiebert)

CONCLUSION

1. As you can see, false teaching is dangerous
2. It has eternal ramifications
3. If you do not confess and believe what the Bible teaches about Jesus, you are deceived and still dead in your trespasses and sins and heading for a rude awakening
4. The Bible gives us a creed, an authoritative account of Christ and His atoning work on the cross
5. It also gives us a full understanding of who Jesus is
6. If you refuse what the Bible says and make up your own assertions about Jesus, you’re in grave danger of hell
7. There is a difference between theological error and heresy
8. Heresy “is a denial of or departure from a doctrine that is essential to the Christian faith” (Peters)
9. “To embrace heresy is to depart from the faith once delivered to the saints and thus to be on a path toward spiritual destruction” (Peters)
10. “It is important to understand that all heresy is error but not all theological error is heresy” (Peters)
11. For example, John MacArthur and R.C. Sproul differed “at least two theological issues: eschatology and the ordinance of baptism. MacArthur is a “leaky dispensationalist” in his eschatology and holds to believer’s baptism whereas Sproul was amillennial and affirmed paedobaptism. It is not that eschatology and baptism are unimportant issues. They are both quite important – but they are not essential components in and of themselves to the gospel. They differed with one another on these issues and yet they respected each other greatly” (Peters)
12. But that’s not what we’re seeing here in 2 John with the gnostics
13. This is not a matter of theological error, it’s a matter of heresy

14. This is the essence of the gospel
15. If we don't get the gospel right identifying what the Bible teaches about the identity of Jesus, then it's heresy and you cannot be saved
16. [Romans 10:9-10](#), "9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."
17. You have to believe what God says to believe
18. You cannot pick and choose what to believe
19. God has made it very narrow just like Jesus said in [John 14:6](#), "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."
20. If you have never believed in the biblical Jesus, I urge you to come to Him today
21. Repent or turn from your sin and believe in the Jesus of the Bible
22. Let's pray (Lord's Supper)

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