

THE TRUTH LIVES
2 John 1-13

The Gathering Place
December 9, 2007

In our Scripture reading today from Matthew 3, John the Baptist identifies the people who should have been leading believers to God's Messiah – the Pharisees and Sadducees – as a “brood of vipers”.

Among the events surrounding the birth of Jesus is the story of the Wisemen from the east who came to worship the newly born King of the Jews. They visited the royal palace in Jerusalem thinking that the new King of the Jews would likely be the son of the then reigning King of the Jews. But King Herod didn't have a baby son and he was deeply troubled by the announcement.

He dreamed up a plan to get rid of this threat to his throne.

After the Biblical scholars had identified the prophecy which predicted where Jesus would be born – Micah 5:2 ***‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.’*** Herod met secretly with these astronomers from the East. He found out the time when the special star had first been observed and then sent the Wisemen on their way to Bethlehem. He asked them to come back to the palace after they had found the child who would be King because, he said, ***I too wish to go and worship Him.***

But Herod was a deceiver! Herod had a selfish murderous intent. He was no worshipper of God nor of God's Christ!

Today, I want to speak to you about DECEIVERS.

One of the shortest books in the Bible is 2 John – just 13 verses.

The first 3 verses are simply the greeting of the author to the recipient of the letter.

Verse 4 states that the children of the recipient of the letter are living their lives according to the truth of God and the writer rejoices that the good news has been effectively passed on from one generation to another.

Verse 5 the writer zeroes in on the central principle of Christian living – LOVE for one another. And when we focus on that kind of relationship within the body of Christ, we will also be walking in obedience to His commands.

If you are a truly loving person, **the laying down of your life kind of love**, you will be a person who lives in obedience to the commands of God.

When Jesus was asked by a lawyer what is the greatest commandment He responded with the commandment ***LOVE the Lord your God with all our heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: LOVE your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commands.*** (Matthew 22:37-40).

In other words – Every commandment will be obeyed by the person who truly LOVES God and one's fellow human beings.

Disobedience will always come out of selfishness. We want our way rather than God's way.

THE TRUTH LIVES!

Page 2

The indictment of God with respect to us all is found in Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

In Romans 3:10-12

“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

And to live unselfishly, loving God totally and demonstrating our love for God, by loving those He loves can only be done when our selfish hearts have been changed.

This is not a new message, this is the message we have heard from the beginning. In fact, there is nothing written in 2 John that has not been expounded upon in considerable detail in 1st John. These are reminders, possibly written near the end of John’s life.

1st John has no mention of the author. In 2nd John he identifies himself as THE ELDER. It may be that 1st John was written relatively early in the Apostle’s ministry and 2nd John is written much later.

The subject that receives the most attention (both by space and placement) is the matter of DECEIVERS.

DECEIVERS that

1. deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.
2. run ahead and do not continue in the teaching of Christ

John instructs the “chosen lady and her children” to:

1. watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.
2. do not take into your house or welcome anyone who does not continue in the teaching of Christ.

Commentators are divided as to who the “*chosen lady and her children*” refers to. Some think that it is a literal person, others think that it is a euphemism for a church congregation. I think it is probably both. Remember, the 1st Century church met, for the most part, in homes. Consequently, I think John is writing to a Growing Place Group Pastor and the church that meets in her home!

Regardless of who it is , let’s consider what is being said:

The church is always most vulnerable to deceivers who arise from among us. We expect the enemy to raise up opposition to the gospel, to bring persecution and suffering against the church, but often we are not very well prepared to deal with the deception that comes from within. In Acts 20:13-35 the Apostle Paul in his going away remarks to the leaders of the house churches in Ephesus counselled them *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!* (verse 28-31)

THE TRUTH LIVES!

Page 3

An early 2nd Century Christian document called the *Didache* (did-a-kay) had this counsel for the followers of Christ:

Now, you should welcome anyone who comes your way and teaches you all we have been saying. But if the teacher proves himself a renegade and by teaching otherwise contradicts all this, pay no attention to him...Now about the apostles and prophets: Act in line with the Gospel precept. Welcome every apostle on arriving, as he were the Lord. But he must not stay beyond one day. In case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet...if he asks for money, he is a false prophet. (Didache 11:1-6)

Notice there is a threefold test:

1. Does the prophet teach the truth?
2. Does he try to stay more than two days?
3. Does he ask for money?

Christians are taught to be loving and generous. That love and generosity can be exploited and is!

We need to understand what Jesus was saying, when he declared ***“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them...Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 7:15, 16 & 21)***

In conclusion,

There are three things to keep in our hearts from this short letter

1. LOVE God and His people
2. Walk or live by the TRUTH
 - THE TRUTH that Jesus came in the flesh – IMMANUEL
 - THE WHOLE TRUTH is in Jesus – don’t run ahead or add to the gospel.
3. Be on your guard against DECEIVERS.

And on that note let’s go out into our world as true followers of Christ, because the TRUTH that lives in us, will be with us forever!