

“WHY STEER CLEAR OF DECEIVERS.”

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Scripture Texts: II John 1:7-13

II John 1:7-9, there are many deceivers.

John begins verse 7 with what sounds like discouraging news. There are many deceivers who have gone out into the world. He doesn't want believers to be naïve about how many, they are not rare, but commonplace.

Don't be discouraged about all the false teaching in the church in the world. Jesus said again and again there would be false angels, false spirits, false apostles, false teachers, false evangelists, false missionaries, false shepherds, false messiahs, anti-christs, wolves in sheep's clothing. There is nothing new here, no surprises. This is the work of Satan, it has never ceased and won't until Christ returns and puts an end to it. The enemy never rests and the enemy is very subtle.

Our world is filled with thousands of cults with millions of followers, false religions, liberal theologies, and worldly ideologies. There are over five thousand cults with millions of followers. Many of them once attended a church.

But we need not fear, “And though this world with devils filled.” Jesus is on His throne and He will not be overthrown and the gates of hell will not prevail against His blood-bought Church.

II John 1:7-9, recognize the deception.

Since there are so many John wants us to know how to recognize them, and fortunately it is not complicated. He boils it down to one basic truth. Notice what John says is the bottom line.

Jesus Christ. Christology is the heart of Christianity. If you get Jesus wrong, you will get everything else wrong. If you get Jesus wrong, John puts it as strongly as possible, you don't have God.

I John 4:2-3 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

All false teachings are defective in their teaching about Jesus. When you leave Jesus behind, you leave salvation behind, you leave behind reconciliation and a relationship with the Father.

“I am the Way. I am the Truth. I am the Life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.”

This is not narrow-minded, bigoted intolerance, it is divinely revealed truth, it is good news.

Of course Satan is going to go after the very heart and soul and core of our faith. He won't deal in secondary things, but go after the most important thing. If he can pull out the cornerstone, the rest of the house will easily crumble.

Someone came up with a simple strategy for identify deception called the *mathematics of cults*. They either add, subtract, multiply or divide. They are listed in your bulletin.

They *add* extra-biblical sources of authority to God's Word, some other book or prophet's teaching.

Deuteronomy 4:2 You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.

Islam adds the Koran. Mormons add Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon. The Jehovah's Witnesses add the New World Translation of the Bible and Charles Taze Russell's Studies in Scripture. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, adds her Science and Health. Cloverdale Bible Way Church in Langley adds the teachings of a prophet called William Branham.

They all think they are adding, improving, advancing, adding the latest progressive revelation. They went ahead of God and lost God in the process.

They deny divine authority of Bible or say it has become corrupted and has errors and is no longer trustworthy, or is incomplete and needs further revelation. Some other source has to be added to make sense or rightly understand the Bible.

They *subtract* from the person and work of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. They deny some aspect of His divinity or humanity; say His redemptive work is inadequate.

II Corinthians 11:4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

When they deny any aspect of the divinity of Jesus then they are also denying the Trinity (three co-equal persons in one divine nature). They deny the God-man, and make Jesus a created being. They take away and rob Jesus of His full divinity. He is an angel or a man.

The Mormon Jesus is a created being, the first child of the father and the spirit-brother of Lucifer—a different Jesus.

One of the strong pressure points today is to subtract the substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross. This is an offense to some. They mock the cross as cosmic child abuse, that God would kill His Son and sacrifice Him in such a violent and abusive way for the sake of our sins.

This is a gross misrepresentation of the meaning of the atonement and of the character and nature of God. It completely misses the meaning of the justice of God and the wrath of God against sin.

They *multiply* requirements for salvation, some sort of works righteousness to gain acceptance with God.

Galatians 1:6-8 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

Galatians 2:16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Galatians 3:2-5 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.

They don't accept that we are accepted by God through grace alone by faith alone in Jesus alone. You have to do certain things to merit or earn salvation and acceptance and peace with God. This work can take many forms. Good works, proselytizing, doing two year mission trips, getting so many converts, doing certain rituals, doing penance, sexual activity.

Salvation depends on membership to the organization and doing certain rituals. In the Mormon cult you have to be baptized to be born again.

They *divide* the loyalties of their followers, away from God through Jesus, and toward their leaders or their group. They claim to be the only path of the truth.

I Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Only their teachers and leaders are to be trusted and recognized as authorities. Only their group has the truth. Salvation is only through their path. All cults, all false religions, all deceivers, all false shepherds, all charlatans do this.

John gives two very strong words. Watch out. Don't have anything to do with them.

II John 1:8-9, watch yourselves.

Be on the watch. Watch out for anyone who challenges or denies the full deity and humanity of Jesus as the God-man, who denies the true and perfect humanity of Jesus, His virgin birth, His sinless life, and His perfect, complete work of atonement, who denies He is the eternal and only Son of the Father.

Why does Scripture give so many warnings about deceivers? Why do we need to stay away? What is the danger, the big deal? Because of what is at stake. Eternal souls are at risk.

We take seriously signs that give warnings, warnings about high voltage, warnings about poisons, warnings about explosives, high places.

We don't tempt fate with our lives, we don't take huge risks with our lives. So we must not with our spiritual lives. Their message is eternally dangerous and destructive. Your full reward is at stake.

Don't be naïve about the danger, it is real, and we are all vulnerable. We live in a fallen world and we are constantly bombarded by the world's lies and influences. Defective doctrine destroys. This is why knowing and teaching true doctrine is so important.

The greatest danger isn't secularism or communism or Islam, it is deception masquerading as Christianity. It is creeping liberalism, soft evangelicalism, eroding Biblical doctrine and Biblical morality.

II John 1:10-11, reject the deception, if anyone comes to you.

How should we relate with deceivers in the world? Why does John say to withhold hospitality and even greeting? How does this text fit with all the texts about hospitality and strangers and loving our enemies?

Context helps. *This warning is about those claiming to represent Christianity*, but who aren't, who are deceivers. He is talking about those who are teaching as if with divine authority.

John is talking about professing believers, members of churches, recognized teachers, who claim the name of Jesus, but are going out as missionaries of a false gospel. The main problem is coming from within the church. Outsiders are much easier to deal with.

Acts 20:29-30 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and *from among your own selves* will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Who was Jesus harshest with? Who did He most oppose? The Pharisees and Sadducees. Why? Because they were part of the true faith and claimed to have the true faith, but were deceived and deceiving. They were wolves in sheep's clothing and they were destroying the flock.

These are the ones to be avoided and excluded from normal Christian hospitality and greeting.

The greeting is more than just "hi, how are you?" The normal Christian greeting was "grace to you and peace from our God and Savior Jesus."

This warning is to the church. Remember churches were house churches, meeting in houses. When Paul addresses these kinds of issues he is speaking to the gathered church.

II Thessalonians 3:6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.

II Thessalonians 3:14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed.

Ephesians 5:11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

It doesn't necessarily apply to individuals in their homes. Sitting in the living room for an hour is not the same as welcoming known heretics into the church.

Jesus sat with sinners and pagans and Gentiles and Samaritans. Paul dealt with people who were dealing in falsehoods, but not of true faith. Peter said be ready to give an answer.

Don't avoid relationships where you can have a witness or a testimony for Christ or stand for the truth or be salt and light. Jesus got close enough to be criticized for being a glutton and a drunkard (Luke 7:34).

If you decide to have a cult person in your home, set some ground rules. They can talk first and you will listen respectfully, but you want to have equal time to respond without interruption. Control the time and conversation and if at any point you are feeling pressured or manipulated, call time out and ask them to leave.

I Peter 3:15 Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

Be prepared to give a short simply explanation of what you believe about Jesus and how we can be saved. You don't have to know or refute their points. You can just testify to what you know to be true.

Use discernment about what you can handle, be wise. And apply this warning to the books you read, what you listen to on TV or the Internet.

Implications and application.

We are reminded of the immense blessing and value of our historic creeds and confessions that ground us in foundational truth and guard us from error. They have stood the test of time and faithfully reflect the truth of Scripture.

We have bedrock, we have keel, we have solid ground, we have the faith of our fathers, we have what is handed down from generation to generation.

The church is created and called to be the pillar and foundation of the truth. We have pastors and elders called to guard the flock and guard the pulpit and keep careful watch over the flock, to watch our life and doctrine closely.

Pray for your pastor and elders. Pray for yourselves and your household. Be watchful. Be wise.