

Sent: Wednesday, January 13, 2016 1:23 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study

John's second epistle--addressed to the "elect lady," in whose home believers probably assembled for worship and fellowship--re-emphasizes some of the most basic truths of the Christian faith, as taught in his gospel, as well in his first epistle. Here he particularly focuses on adherence to "truth" concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ, love for one another, and obedience to the commands and teaching of Christ.

John's emphasis on the "incarnation" and "deity" of Christ is particularly significant, since denial of these basic doctrines most clearly identifies false teachers--who John calls "deceivers who have gone out into the world, and who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh."

John was particularly encouraged to find believers who were "walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father!" We are reminded of his words in John 13:34-35, where Jesus gave the disciples "a new commandment...that you love one another, even as I loved you...that all men will know that you are My disciples... And in John 14:16-17, where He said that He would "ask the Father, that He would give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever, i.e., the Spirit of Truth...who would abide in you." And, in John 16:13, He added that "when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He would guide you into all truth..." And then, in John 17:17, as part of His "intercessory prayer" to the Father--just prior to going to the cross--where He prayed that they would be "sanctified in the truth; Your word is truth!"

But there's another theme that rings clear in this second epistle, and that concerns guidelines for "hospitality" and true Christian fellowship. The Scriptures are replete with instructions for believers to show hospitality to others, as part of Christian love (e.g., I Pet. 4:8-9; Heb. 13:2; Tit. 1:7-9; Rom. 13: 7-9). But John makes one exception--and that concerns providing accommodations and, in effect, the "right hand of fellowship," to false teachers who were consciously attempting to introduce heretical doctrines within the newly forming Christian community. John's writing must be viewed in context of the times when new believers and "itinerant" Christian teachers, even the apostle Paul, traveled and would need a place to stay--and where homes were also where early believers met for worship and fellowship! So it became common practice for local Christians to open up their homes to traveling "believers."

And yet, John's words are emphatic in drawing a line! "Anyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God...and, if anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting" (II John 9-11). The apostle Paul, in Gal. 1:8-9, goes even further in confronting these kind of false teachers: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!" And he repeats that same thought in the next verse! Wow!

Goes to show us how critically essential it is to preach and teach and uphold sound Christian doctrine! This Biblical guideline certainly has important ramifications for us today, when so much pressure is being placed on the church, and on Christians in general, to accept everyone's beliefs and even to join together and form ecumenical relationships to "keep the peace" and, in

effect, to "give the right hand of fellowship," and make everyone feel good about whatever they believe, even if it's contrary to what the Bible has to say!

And so, the challenge for us today--both individually and as a church family--is to find a way in this culture to stand uncompromisingly for the truth of God, as recorded in the inspired Word while, at the same time, exercising godly wisdom and discretion, and demonstrating true Christian love for others! May God help us!

On to 3 John!

Lowell