

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 66

1 John Chapter 2

Open

What do we usually crave that is unhealthy, fattening, enslaving, immoral, or illegal? If you could have it all, would you?

Introduction

Having reiterated confidence in his readers' knowledge of the Father (2: 12-14), John moves to his first explicit directive: Do not love the world or anything in it. John is not advising us to beat a retreat from the everyday life into self-preoccupation. If that were his intention, it would be practically impossible to fulfill the old, yet new, commandment to love one's brother or sister (2: 7-8, 10). At the same time, John is not advocating that Christians should hate the world which, by and large, is God's creation; and God made all things well. The earth and all its fullness is the Lord's. But the passage carries a stark reminder that we must make this radical choice (of not loving the world), on which hinges nothing less than our eternal destiny. We must unravel what John means by "the world".

Read 1 John 2: 15-29

Discussion Questions

1. What does John mean by "the world" (vv15-16)? Do human desires contradict God's will: Always? Never? Sometimes? How? Why is it that we cannot love the world and have the love of the Father in us?
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2. What are the three sins which are typical of "the world" (v16)?

3. But aren't we all still struggling at times with loving the world and the things of the world? Does this mean that God is not abiding in us? _____

(Well, I think if we go back to the 1st chapter, we see that John has already said that yes, we still sin. In fact, he says we need to keep admitting that truth and handing it over to the One who can and does forgive us and who is destroying that sin in us. God will remind us over and over of the emptiness of the world's promises. Our participation in God's work in our lives is to agree with God that our lives and true identities are only to be found in Him)

Clarification on the meaning of "the world"

The world (*kosmos*) acquired a moral sense- It began to mean the world **apart from God** (Barclay), a world which, in fact, had forsaken the God who made it. It is now characterized by base desires, false values, and egoism. To have the love of the Father in us is to know who we are and where our life really comes from, contrary to this world's bogus promises. To love the world is to be seeking for our life and identity in it, to believe that it has something which is going to give our life a meaning, purpose and identity apart from God. Obviously, John is not speaking here of enjoying the earth and the beauty of God's creation. He is not speaking against music and art that can be enjoyed and reflected upon but an attitude of mind that is not convinced that what God is giving is truly enough.

4. How would you recognize and resist an "antichrist" if you met one (vv18-22; see also 4:3)?

Comment

Antichrist can mean either the opponent of Christ or the one who seeks to put himself in his place. The simple way to think of it is that Christ is the incarnation of God and goodness, and antichrist is the incarnation of the devil and evil.

5. Amid false teachers and defection, what three safeguards for continuance in the faith does John give? (See especially vv24-27).

6. What is the "anointing from the Holy One" (v20; John14: 16-17; 15: 26; 16: 13)? Where else in this passage does John mention "the anointing" and what is it meant to accomplish?

6a. How is this related to knowing the truth "from the beginning" (vv20-24)? _____

7. If a professing Christian falls away from the truth, what is suggested thereby which, before the falling away, may not have been at all obvious?

8. To deny that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) has been described as the supreme lie. Why, and what are the implications of this denial? (vv22-23)

9. How did John arrive at the view that it is an impossible position to deny the Son and still have the Father? _____

10. What does John mean by "acknowledging the Son" (v.23; see 1: 3,7; 4: 2,15)?

Comment

"The false teachers pleaded: 'It may be that we have different ideas from yours about Jesus; but you and we do believe the same things

about God...' It is the consistent teaching of the New Testament, and it is the claim of Jesus himself, that without him no one can know God. (Read Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22; John 12:44-45)" -(Barclay). Jesus stands in a unique relationship to God; and to deny that relationship is to deny the certainty that everything Jesus said about God is true and to deny Jesus is to be separated from God, for our relationship to God depends on our reaction to Jesus (See Matthew 10:32-33).

11. How can you tell if a "new truth" will bring insight to living, or will undermine the faith? _____

CONCLUSION

It seems that the situation in the churches to which John is writing is that there were people who had been a part of the church, but had pulled away and were now trying to influence others still in the church to follow them. Perhaps some of these people were still claiming to be Christians. How are the readers to discern what is the truth? This is exactly what John has addressed in this passage. He then proceeds to tell them that they are in the last hour. This assertion challenges the doctrines of those people who John calls "antichrists" that Jesus has left and that His kingdom is distant and doesn't really affect our lives here and now. But John says this is the last hour - that all of life after the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus is in the "last hour". Don't be fooled--the kingdom is imminent, it has come closer in Christ and is still "at hand" and this thought should orient all that we do here and now.

John assures his readers on the flip side that to confess Christ is to have the Father also. And he assures them more than once that God is already abiding in them by His Spirit. Notice how many times John repeats the word "abide" in this passage. Whatever is going on in our lives, whatever we are struggling with, we are to hand it all to Him, and to rest in, wait on, live in His presence and peace. It is our abiding in Him, not counting on ourselves that will make us confident when He returns.