

Our Most Important Belief: Jesus

1 John | Week 5 | 2:18-27

Mark Henderson | July 4, 2021

Short Intro – Good morning. Thanks for coming to gather with us today to celebrate the 4th of July! I'm Mark Henderson, one of the pastor's here at Christ Community and it is my honor to have the opportunity to teach from God's word this morning.

Our Most Important Belief: Jesus 1 Jn 2:18-27

John writes to help you identify the signs that the gospel is true and that your experience with God is genuine. In this third test of genuine faith, the doctrinal test, John warns the reader that believers must hold to correct belief about Jesus and not be deceived (2:18–27)

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Believers must hold to correct belief about Jesus and not be deceived; this is the third test. The intellectual or doctrinal test. (2:18–27)

History Lesson <<

What we know about the Fourth of July. How do your experiences and relationships affect your understanding of the truth?

Intro – Things that happened on today's date . . . July 4th. For most Americans, July 4th is synonymous with Independence Day. However, the adoption of the Declaration of Independence wasn't the only important historical event to take place on that date. As a very patriotic day, we would expect many patriotic things to happen on the 4th of July.

- 1802: the opening day of the United States Military Academy at West Point
- 1803: the announcement of the Louisiana Purchase
- 1826, 1831: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Monroe die.
- 1845: Texas agrees to become a member of the United States.

JUNE 4th

- 1919 : The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, guaranteeing women the right to vote, is passed by Congress and sent to the states for ratification.
- 1942 : The Battle of Midway began
- 1984 Born In The USA is released by Bruce Springsteen

Very interesting facts aren't they? These last three especially just seem to make sense . . . the right to vote, the battle of Midway, a great classic song about the USA, of course they would have happened on our nation's Independence Day! But, here's the thing. Those last three events actually happened on **JUNE 4th** of those years. Any history buffs who had their suspicions?

Getting these facts wrong by a month is not the end of the world, but we all know the truth matters. None of us wants to be tricked or deceived into believing something that isn't true.

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Here in this passage, which starts at v18, after his two brief digressions, John reverts to his principal thesis, **namely discrimination between the true and the false by means of tests**. To the moral and social tests which he has already expounded (3–11), he now adds his doctrinal test. John first draws a clear distinction between the heretics and the genuine Christians (18–21); then defines the nature and effect of the heresy (22–23); and finally describes the two safeguards against heresy which his readers already have (24–27).¹

In this important section John turns from encouragement and exhortation to warning.²

John's first warning this morning is that . . .

1. It's the last hour, relationships can be tricky. (2:18-21)

WARNING – be aware of anyone who does not get Jesus right

- “Dear children” – Remember he is writing to a group he loves.
- Certainly, the antichrist's teaching is here recognized as being fundamentally against Christ and a denial of Christ (v.22)³
 - There is something more here than just a “pretender.”
 - The actions of the antichrist are in opposition to Jesus, not just pretending or imitating him.
- In contrast to the false teachers who were antichrists, the true Christian has received the same spiritual ‘chrism’ as Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 1:21–22).
- It is through the illumination of the Spirit of truth that we *know the truth*, as is elaborated in verse 27.⁴

The last hour: The New Testament writers do not have an exact vocabulary to describe the chronology of the last time or the end, and it is not always easy to discern to what eschatological period or event they are alluding. What is clear is that they regarded the first coming of Christ as having inaugurated the new age and settled the doom of the old. ‘The age to come’ had come, and ‘the present age’ was therefore drawing to a close. It was not, of course, anticipated that this period would last for ever. It was a stage of transition called both the ‘last days’ (Mic. 4:1; Acts 2:17; cf. Joel 2:28; Heb. 1:1–2) and the ‘last times’ (1 Pet. 1:20; cf. 1 Cor. 10:11). The New Testament writers who describe its beginning are already looking forward to its consummation. The ‘last days’ will themselves have ‘last days’, a period of grievous moral and religious decadence (2 Tim. 3:1ff.; 2 Pet. 3:3). Similarly, the ‘last times’ will have a ‘last time’ in which ungodly scoffers will arise (Jude 18; cf. 1 Tim. 4:1). Nor is this all. The ‘last time’ of the ‘last times’ will have a culminating last time’ when our eternal inheritance will be revealed (1 Pet. 1:5; cf. Jas 5:3). In the same way, ‘the last days’ of the ‘last days’ will

¹ John R. W. Stott, [*The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 107.

² Colin G. Kruse, [*The Letters of John*](#), ed. D. A. Carson, Second Edition., Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2020), 105.

³ John R. W. Stott, [*The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 108.

⁴ John R. W. Stott, [*The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 110.

themselves have a final 'last day' when Christ raises the dead and judges the world (John 6:39–40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48).⁵

John could state on theological grounds that the last hour had struck, but this was not the same as affirming chronologically when the last hour would end. ⁶

The Antichrist: 2:19 Referring to the antichrists mentioned in the previous verse, the writer says, "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us." Those whom the author describes as antichrists were in fact once members of his own Christian community, but they had seceded from it: "they went out from us." Their secession, as far as the author is concerned, only showed that they had never really been true members of the Christian community, and this is reiterated in his next statements. First he says, "For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us," and then he adds, "but their going showed that none of them belonged to us." If these people had been true members of his community, which they were not, they would have remained as members and not seceded as they had done. The last clause in the sentence, "but their going showed that none of them belonged to us," is actually a subordinate purpose clause (introduced by *hina* + subjunctive). Translated literally it would read, "but [their going was] in order that they be revealed that they all are not of us." As he looks back on their act of secession, the author understands its purpose to have been that the true colors of the secessionists might be revealed.

As this passage unfolds, we discover hints concerning the activities of these people after their secession from the author's community: they denied that Jesus is the Christ (2:22), and they tried to lead the readers of this letter astray (2:26). The author's primary aims are to warn his readers about the secessionists' attempts to deceive them and to arm his readers against them.⁷ We see that they did not get Jesus right. They had bad Christology.

John's second warning involves . . .

2. Uncovering the big lie. (2:22-23)

How to spot a liar in one easy step.

- The false teaching of those who have left the church is now revealed. **It is a denial that Jesus is the Christ.**
- A study of John's letters makes it plain that by this phrase he does not simply mean a denial that Jesus was the Messiah of Old Testament expectation (cf. Acts 5:42; 9:22; 17:3; 18:28).⁸ **1John 4:3** says that "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."

⁵ John R. W. Stott, [*The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 111.

⁶ John R. W. Stott, [*The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 112.

⁷ Colin G. Kruse, [*The Letters of John*](#), ed. D. A. Carson, Second Edition., Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2020), 110–111.

⁸ John R. W. Stott, [*The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 114.

Sometimes lies sneak up on you. It's okay to have doubts, to ask questions, to wonder. In those discussions around faith, the Bible and Jesus, you need to be able to ask questions in the church among your friends to get at the truth. So how do you know when a friend has moved from genuine seeking of answers to grow their faith and challenging you with hard questions to wandering from the faith and becoming a deceiver in opposition to Jesus? When that person begins to deny that Jesus is the Christ, you know that the red lights on your dashboard should be going off. If they are sensitive to the Spirit of God, they will be open to the truth and recognize the truth about Jesus. But if they will not or do not confess Jesus, and are teaching drawing other people toward that lie, then that person is in dangerous territory and you need to be very cautious to not let that relationship drag you away from the truth you have experienced in Christ.

John's third warning is how to guard against getting our most important belief wrong . . .

3. Stick with Jesus. (2:24-27)

- Having distinguished between the false teachers and the true believers, and having exposed the nature and consequences of the heresy, **John now draws attention to the two safeguards which will protect his readers from being led astray.**
 - If they are to be guarded against error, two things must 'remain' in them
 - First the message which 'you have heard from the beginning' (24)
 - Secondly 'the anointing you received from him' (27).⁹
- This is the biblical balance which is too seldom preserved. Some honor the Word and neglect the Spirit who alone can interpret it; others honor the Spirit but neglect the Word out of which he teaches. **The only safeguard against lies is to have remaining within us both the Word that we heard from the beginning and the anointing that we received from him.**
 - It is by these old possessions, not by new teachings or teachers, that we shall remain in the truth.¹⁰

Think of it like this, an illustration originally shared by Andy Stanley, Yale physicist Robert Adair studied the science behind hitting a major league fastball and published it in a book, *The Physics of Baseball* (2002). Here's one of the things he found:

- A 90mph fastball travels the 60' 6" from the pitcher's hand to the catcher's glove in 400 milliseconds—that's a little less than a half a second.
- He figured out it takes the batter's brain 200 milliseconds to find the ball in the air, get the image in his brain, and decide whether or not to swing. So ½ the time the ball is in the air, the batter is simply trying to decide what to do!
- Well, if the batter decides to swing, the brain spends another 100 milliseconds deciding to swing the bat high, low, inside, or outside the strike zone.
- So you're down 300 milliseconds before you've ever even swung.

⁹ John R. W. Stott, [*The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 116.

¹⁰ John R. W. Stott, [*The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 19, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 118.

- o The swing itself takes 150 milliseconds. During the first 50, the batter can stop the swing. Beyond 50 milliseconds the bat is moving at 70% of its final speed and can't be stopped.
- o Adair says a 7-millisecond variation will cause the hitter to either hit a foul ball or miss the ball altogether.
- o So if you're lost, let me catch you up (200 locating the ball; 100 making a decision; 150 swinging the bat)—450 milliseconds. But the ball is in the catcher's glove after 400 seconds, so Adair concludes that according to the laws of physics, hitting a 90mph fastball is impossible.
- o How many of you agree with that conclusion?
- o You don't. Why? Is it because you can prove him wrong in this or that calculation?
- o No, you say, "Well I don't know where he's wrong and I'm not sure about all the physics, but I have seen it happen. I've seen a guy hit a 90mph fastball. In fact, I've seen a guy hit a 95mph fastball... (If 90mph is impossible, what about 95mph?). I can't explain the facts, but I also can't deny what I've seen."

"You are smart enough not to opt for the unexplainable over the undeniable. The undeniable takes precedence over the unexplainable." – Andy Stanley

This is true of our relationship with Jesus. John starts off this book reminding us, "This is not a theory we have accepted because we can explain it all; we believe this because Jesus rose from the dead. We saw him. We touched him. Felt the wounds in his body after his resurrection." He is undeniable.

BTW, before I move on, let me point out that John is confronting one of the most commonly held assumptions in our culture about religious truth. People frequently talk about religion as if it were subjective opinion. The spirit of the day says that **"All religions are subjectively helpful; they are not objectively true."**

Do you know the difference in subjective/objective truth? "I'm cold"; vs. "Lincoln is the capital of Nebraska." Our world wants to put Christianity in the realm of the subjective. "It's good for you; your preference, your experience."

John says there is good reason to stick with Jesus. Jesus was his friend! Back in chapter 1, "There was nothing subjective about the resurrection of Jesus. We actually touched him. And in light of his resurrection we had to doubt our doubts." What about us today? Are you and I willing to doubt our doubts? I get it, there is a difference between us and John. You might be thinking, "Well, John got to see Jesus and touch him... what good does that do for me?" I'm glad you're thinking. In **1John 1:3**, he answers: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Fellowship. John wants us to have the same first-hand relationship and knowledge he had with Jesus. This is where Jesus is undeniable to many of us.

The miracles John witnessed Jesus perform were the life of God made manifest. The miracles were real, they happened, but they pointed to things that were true about God—and these spiritual realities we can experience every bit as much as John did.

- In **Mark 4** Jesus is out on the sea with his disciples and a terrible storm is raging all around them and they are terrified and they wake him up and say, "Don't you care that we are going to

perish?” And Jesus stands up and says, “Peace be still!” Has that ever experienced His calming presence? Either Jesus has actually stilled the storm in your life, or, even better, given you peace in the storm by showing you that it was never out of His control?

- In **John 4** *Jesus meets a woman* who discovers that He knew everything about her, each of her dark and dirty secrets, but he loved her anyway. Have you ever had that sense of the love of God pressing in on your soul? He knows you fully and yet . . . and yet . . . loves you fully.
- In **John 6** *Jesus multiplied a boy's bread and fish and fed 5000*. But this was also to demonstrate God's power to truly satisfy as the bread of life—and that those who come to him will find a soul satisfaction in him. To a starving child, knowing him feels like sitting down to your favorite meal. Have you felt that? It's undeniable to you that God is real, more evidence that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Jesus.
- In **Matthew 9** (vs. 20), *a woman came up to Jesus*. This woman had a condition for 12 years which made her unclean, which meant no one would touch her—she was unlovable. Jesus calls her the tenderest term, “daughter,” and she is deeply aware of the love of God the Father for her. Have you heard that in your soul? You are my child!

Are you getting the point? Have these things ever happened with you?

We stick with Jesus because we have experienced life with Him. But, the proof of Christianity does not rest entirely on your experience. **Your experiences don't prove Christianity, but they do validate what the Bible teaches.**

We stick with Jesus because we have experienced life with Him. This theme reappears in our passage today. **1 John 2:20** *“But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge... [22] Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? [26] I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. [27] But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you.*

This might be a little confusing, but here's what he's saying:

- As you are in the process of becoming a Christian, the Holy Spirit of God gives you an innate sense of God in which the truth about Jesus just makes sense to you.
- It's like he gives you ears to hear the voice of God. The voice has always been speaking, but you suddenly get ears to hear. It's what John Calvin called “a sense of God”.

Conclusion and Application

Our Most Important Belief: Jesus 1 Jn 2:18-27

John writes to help you identify the signs that the gospel is true and that your experience with God is genuine. In this third test of genuine faith, the doctrinal test, John warns the reader that believers must hold to correct belief about Jesus and not be deceived (2:18–27)

There is no one more important to have a right perspective on than Jesus.