

Session 3

September 19, 2021

SURE OF THE TRUTH

1 John 2:18-29

Perhaps no story more clearly defines mankind's attitude toward the concept of truth than that which occurred in the court of Pontius Pilate on Christ's way to the cross. When questioned by Pilate if Jesus was a king, Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." Scoffing, Pilate retorted, "What is truth?" (John 18:37-38). Like Pilate, many question the very nature of truth. Is there such a thing? And if so, how do we know what is true and what is not? Our passage this week reminds us that truth does indeed exist, can be known, and must be embraced.

The truth is always under attack (vv. 18-21). The truth has been under attack ever since the serpent lied to Eve in the garden. While the overall theme of 1 John is solidifying believers in fellowship with Christ and the church, John revealed the struggle the early church had with false teachers. All of the heresies swirling around denied some aspect of Jesus Christ, either His fully deity or His full humanity. In every case, the truth of *who Jesus is* and *what Jesus accomplished* on the cross was under attack. Only John applied the word *antichrist* as a title, and only in his letters. But the concept was revealed as early as Daniel and culminates in Revelation. The word itself simply means "against Christ." John used the term in verse 18 both specifically ("*Antichrist is coming*") as well as generically ("many *antichrists* have come"). Most scholars believe that the long succession of false teachers and prophets foreshadow the rise of *the* Antichrist during the end times Tribulation period (see 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13). In these few verses, we see four characteristics of those who are "against Christ." First, their prominence indicates we are nearing the last days (v. 18). Second, they have always been among us (v. 18). Third, their false teachings distinguish them from true believers (v. 19). Fourth, the Holy Spirit enables us to remain faithful to the truth (see John 16:13). For reflection: *If John suggested we are in the last days, how do you explain the nearly two-thousand years that has since passed?*

The truth is always found in Christ (vv. 22-26). Here, John focuses on the central truth of Christianity in general, and our salvation specifically: the person of Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). The whole of the matter can be summed up in one question: *Is Jesus Christ truly the Son of God who has come from God, to redeem us back to God?* (v. 22). Notice that those who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, are denying the promise, and plan, and person of God the Father (vv. 22-23). Why? Because only God in the flesh could serve as the sinless substitutionary sacrifice for mankind's sin. This is not an "either/or" but a "both/and" proposition. Notice how John emphasizes the issue from both sides: if you deny the Son, you cannot belong to the Father. But when you confess the Son, you are confessing the Father at the same time (vs. 23). This—the full deity of Christ—is likely what John was referring to as the message they received from the beginning (v. 24), which was under steady attack by false teachers (v. 26). For reflection: *Have you noticed that no other religion (only Christianity) accepts Jesus as God incarnate? What do the rest say about Him?*

The truth is always evident (vv. 27-29). Two key words are prominent in these final verses. The *anointing* John refers to is the indwelling Holy Spirit. He *remains* in the believer and *teaches* the believer the truth (v. 27). Both verb forms indicate a prolonged and continual action. The word *remain* (often translated “abide”) is used three times in these verses. In verse 27, the Spirit abides in us and we are to abide in Him. Verse 28, however, refers to the one appearing; therefore, we are to abide in Christ as well. Notice how John has woven the fabric of the Trinity in with the believer! The result? Since Christ is righteous, and we abide in Him, His truth is lived out in a life characterized by righteousness (v. 29). For reflection: *Only John uses the phrase “born again.” Besides the Gospel of John, chapter 3, can you identify the other times he uses the phrase in this epistle?*