

“Receive Him Not”

False teachers are going to permeate the church, and those who are loyal to the truth will seek to protect it (2 John 9-11). A false teacher who goes too far goes beyond the established bounds of teaching or instruction, and it is implied that there is a failure to obey properly (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6). Instead, we have to “abide” (remain, continue, persist) in the truth. False teachers are not content to remain within the confines of truth, but invariably add erroneous interpretations and distortions to the Bible.

What is the “*doctrine of Christ*”? Many say that it is the biblical teaching about Christ, and as long as we agree with aspects of His life, we can have fellowship even though we may have doctrinal differences. Nevertheless, how the phrase is used elsewhere can help us determine its meaning. It is used in connection with the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:12), Balaam (Revelation 2:14), and the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:15). Is the phrase speaking of the information about these groups or their teaching? What about the “*doctrine of Christ*” in Hebrews 6:1? Is it fundamentals about Him or His gospel?

Seeing that John had teaching in mind, how do we respond? A common idea to uphold this passage while still allowing men whom we love but teach falsehood to hold gospel meetings, is to say that it is okay as long as they do not teach their specific false doctrine. But John used broad language to show that if someone “*does not abide*,” we should not have fellowship with them. He had just discussed a specific example of not believing that Jesus came in the flesh, but he was more broad and general in vs. 9-11, teaching us that we must not participate or have communion with those who promote error.

Kyle Campbell