

- Christ in the Flesh

Sunday, March 27, 2022 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

2 John 7 “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

Introduction: The Apostle John wrote the Gospel that bears his name, three short letters and the Book of Revelation at the end of the Bible. He was the only apostle to die a natural death, though he survived numerous attempts on his life and spent some time as an elderly person in the salt mines of the Isle of Patmos, a miserable prison of an island that he was not supposed to survive. The Lord Jesus, while on the cross, directed John to take care of His mother Mary and she spent her elder days with him in Ephesus. John didn't start writing until late in life, probably knowing that he was the last surviving apostle and the last thing I ever read about him was that toward the end, he wasn't able to walk on his own so people would have to carry him to church. Whenever he was carried in he would say to the congregation over and over, "little children, love one another. Love one another." He wrote in the simplest language of any document in the New Testament. His three letters are written at a sixth grade level, yet he includes some of the most profound insights.

- Set the stage

John, in the second shortest document in the New Testament writes to the "elect lady", which was either a personal friend or the symbolic representation of a local church, or churches is the letter was carried to several cities and read in local house churches. He wrote of keeping the Lord's commands, and then he wrote of false teachers. Even at this early stage of the church's life there were people teaching corrupt lessons regarding God and Christ. In this letter he gave a specific warning; it's in verse seven, which reads, "For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

- Main Point: “coming in the flesh” refers the Incarnation and the Resurrection

Every time I read this verse I pause because it is not what I would expect. If you were to ask me what "make or break" theological point would be at the center of this letter I would have guessed the confession "Jesus is Lord" but that is not it. That confession figures prominently in Scripture, that is true, but here it is rather that Jesus has come in the flesh. People were teaching that was not true and John thought it important enough to warn people about it, even to tell them to keep away from people who taught such things. So why was this so important, that Jesus did not simply appear, but was an actual, physical human being with a human body?

- Amplify

John asserts this same article of faith even more strongly in his first epistle but there are subtle and important differences between what he wrote in his first epistle as opposed to this one. In the first epistle the emphasis when he wrote of Jesus coming in the flesh was on the historical event of his birth and its permanence. The second epistle emphasizes that this is a continuous fact.

Incarnation means the God is present in your everyday.

That means that the Incarnation, the fact that Jesus actually joined the human race when He was born, and who retained His humanity when He ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, means that the Lord finds your everyday life of value and worth His attention. With the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit, God is involved on our everyday lives. By His taking on a

human body He shows that human life on this earth mattered to the plan of God. By the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit He shows that what you do today with your lives matters to the plan of God now. God is present in your everyday.

Resurrection means that you will be present in His Presence.

The fact that He resurrected with a human body means that you will be present in His Presence, for the Resurrection of Jesus foreshadows the resurrection of all His followers, and you will be resurrected in a body. It will be a different body, recognizable but not susceptible to disease or death. All of that and more is part of what it means to assert that Jesus came in the flesh.

- Application

The application is that what you do while in this body matters. Everyday life matters. The choices you make in the everyday matter to the plan of God, who pays close attention to our everyday lives. Because Jesus came in a body, the Holy Spirit is present in the persons who follow Jesus. Because Jesus was resurrected in a body, that means that there is a destiny for you in a body that will never be destroyed.

- Conclusion

I always read that passage in 1 John and in 2 John with a little bit of surprise, because I expected John to insist upon the confession of “Jesus is Lord” that is prevalent in other parts of the Bible. But here it is that “Jesus has come in the flesh”, contrary to what some taught then and now tells us that everyday life matters if God was willing to join humanity and live in a human body. That He was resurrected in a human body shows the humans who follow Him had a destiny awaiting them that is more marvelous than we can comprehend. All that is found in the phrase that Christ has come in the flesh.