

Truth, Trump, or Theory: Believe in this Jesus Above All Else

Max Fernandez

Certainty: Absolute Truths that Produce Joyful Assurance
Critical Theory; Assurance; Antichrist; Confidence / 1 John 2:18-27

I was at a restaurant a while back, and I ordered a water while someone next to me ordered a Sprite. During the course of conversation, I unwittingly grabbed a cup for a drink. I was surprised by the taste because I was expecting water, and what I drank was Sprite. Both water and Sprite have similar appearances, so it was an honest mistake. It was not until I experienced the different sensation of taste that I realized my mistake. *In like manner, there are Christians who are attempting to find assurance in what they think is Jesus pure and simple, but they keep having these experiences that seem to jolt their confidence. I believe one of the reasons this happens is because of the “allure” of other truth claims.*

The allure of other “truth claims” is subtle. These claims have elements of truth in them; they appeal to our experiences. These claims often come to us through loved ones. This information or news often leads us to a kind of living that is full of skepticism or fear — almost a kind of scared living. Often this kind of living is filled with excessive “what if” living or an utter pessimism. The information we had been listening to has successfully led us to a sort of faith that produces fear and worry.

The two extremes of this kind of knowledge or information could not be clearer in our society. You can listen to Bill Cunningham or Sean Hannity. On the other end of the spectrum, you can listen to Chris Cuomo or Shepherd Smith. What we often don't realize is how both of these extremes are telling us to believe something. **Christians are kind of caught in the middle**, and they often don't realize when they begin to add these assertions they are hearing to Jesus Christ. Christianity then becomes a sort of mixture of stories they know about Jesus mixed with solutions they are hearing from their information sources. What is happening, unconsciously, is that this is leading us down a path where we unwittingly take faith away from the sufficiency of Jesus and invest our faith in an alternative to bring about assurance.

John helps us to know what the truth is:

1 John 2:22 KJV 1900

²² Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

› **Jesus is the Christ has serious implications. It means that:**

- God has become flesh.
- There is someone who can adequately deal with our sins.
- We can have eternal life.
- The Bible has been fulfilled.
- There is a clear answer for sin/life/right and wrong.

Sometimes a child is caught between wanting to pick something else up, although their hands are already full; they have to let go of one thing to pick up another. Likewise, we unwittingly hear all of these truth claims and begin to set down the sufficiency of Jesus and attempt to find our confidence in other people or theories. **Who Jesus is, as presented in scripture, needs no support system from a political party or from any other worldview; yet there are Christians who unwittingly have sought for confidence and joyful assurance based on conservative politics or Theory-based teaching.** It is imperative that we take our eyes off of men who are changing the truth of Jesus Christ or who are calling for us to trust in what they are saying.

› **Alternatively, we must abide in the truth of Jesus Christ alone for confidence.**

(1) This truth is active [does 3 things] (1 John 2:18-19)

Hydrogen peroxide, when applied on an open wound, fizzes and bubbles. It is a sign that it is killing bacteria. **Likewise, this truth of Jesus is active and does three things:**

(i) Shows who is on the dark side (v.18)

1 John 2:18 KJV 1900

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

John uses the term *antichristos* to specifically identify those who are against Christ. In particular, these individuals denied that Jesus is the Messiah, and that the Messiah was manifested in body. To deny the truth of Jesus manifests on which side you are.

(ii) Shows that the timer is ticking down (v.18)

Notice the phrase *last time*, which is used to identify a change that has taken place. This would be a reference to the limited amount of time that the darkness has as the world is passing away. Remember what John already said:

1 John 2:17 KJV 1900

¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

(iii) Shows that only those who stay in the body are really in the light (v.19)

1 John 2:19 KJV 1900

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

This truth of Jesus either leads us to sticking together or breaking apart. What John emphasizes here is that those who persevere in this truth are manifesting that they are part of God's people, while those who do not were never part of God's people.

Do you believe that Jesus is God incarnate? If you consider yourself to be a Christian but find yourself denying that Jesus is the Messiah, then you are not a Christian. Your confidence is falsely founded.

If you are a believer, how serious are you about being formally part of a body that affirms Jesus is the Christ? Being known as part of a body who affirms Jesus Christ mattered in the 1st Century, and it matters today. An individual cannot apparently leave something of which he or she were not known to be a part, and of which there were clear doctrinal parameters.

(2) This truth has no knock-off brands — only single Source (1 John 2:20)

There are knock-off brands and sources for just about everything. One that is pretty common is Cheerios. Here, John gives assurance to the believers by drawing their attention to the single Source of this truth:

1 John 2:20 KJV 1900

²⁰ But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

The word *unction* here means anointing. You also see it in 1 John 2:27, and this is a reference to a special gift that the Lord has given to his people:

1 John 2:27 KJV 1900

²⁷ But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

1 John 3:24 is a little more explicit:

1 John 3:24 KJV 1900

²⁴ And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

God has given His people the Holy Spirit so that they might know all things. This is also reminiscent of John 14:26:

John 14:26 KJV 1900

²⁶ But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Knowing *all things* in this context is that they would know all things which are necessary for denying the liars. This is not a reference to some supernatural omniscience that Christians were going to receive.

What this all means is that there were no other sources for this truth.

There are no knock-offs or generic brands. The assurance that these Christians needed came from a truth that had an exclusive Source — the

Holy One. The usage of the Holy One calls to mind the unholiness of mankind. We cannot go far in any of the apostolic writings without being reminded as to why we need the Holy One. We need Him because we are so unholy. Have you refused Jesus Christ because you have never really seen your need for Him? Have you considered that if you have no care for Jesus Christ that it may be because you do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you?

(3) This truth will not allow remastering, modifications, or add-ons (1 John 2:21-23)

There was a device game called “Tiny Tower.” In this game, you build your tower in which you can place all kinds of places such as housing, stores...etc. One of the problems with the game is that the developers could not keep up with demand. People were building these towers in this game, but they would get to the limit and have to wait for the next update to come out. The truth that John is calling the people to confidence in needs no add-ons, updates, or modifications. There are no glitches.

1 John 2:21-23 KJV 1900

²¹ I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. ²³ Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: *(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

The term *liar* is a strong term that connects these *antichrists* with Satan. Remember what Jesus said in John 8:44:

John 8:44 KJV 1900

⁴⁴ Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

There is no middle ground regarding this truth. To deny what God has said in sending Jesus, the *Logos*, is to deny the Father:

Hebrews 1:1-2 KJV 1900

¹ GOD, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, ² Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

What God has said in sending his Son is complete. To deny the Son is to deny the Father. Jesus is the absolute truth of God, and Jesus is absolutely sufficient as the Savior. Have you ever considered that to not accept Jesus as Lord is to lie against absolute truth? Have you ever considered that to add faith to anything except Jesus is to lie against absolute truth?

(4) This truth requires proper application (1 John 2:24-27)

Most people wear deodorant. It is a helpful means of preventing bad smell and perspiration. Most people put deodorant on in the mornings before they get dressed, but did you know that proper application of most deodorants requires that you put the deodorant on before you go to bed? By the way, it actually does make a difference. All that to say, proper application of the truth matters.

John gives the command to allow what they had heard from the beginning to remain in them:

1 John 2:24 KJV 1900

²⁴ Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

If the truth of who Jesus is abides in them, then they will continue with faith in Jesus and the Father. This is where much of the problem exists. We have competing truth claims that are subtly calling for our faith. **It is not that they are telling us to stop believing in Jesus, but they are morphing our belief in Jesus.** This evolution leads us to be people who speak the right thing but believe something else.

What a comforting verse 1 John 2:25 is:

1 John 2:25 KJV 1900

²⁵ And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.

- › This verse brings to mind again **the marshmallow test**. It is a verse that puts everything into proper perspective. It is this truth of God's promise that must continue to abide in us as well.

Finally, **how do I consistently and rightly apply this truth?** That is what John answers in the final two verses:

1 John 2:26-27 KJV 1900

²⁶ These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. ²⁷ But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

First, the New Testament apostolic writings must be read and believed. **Second**, we must listen to what God's Spirit through these writings teaches us. **Third**, the message from the Spirit is clear: "*Remain with faith in the sufficiency of Jesus*" [to the exclusion of all others] and not with faith in the sufficiency of Trump or Theory. Are you comforted by the promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ? Are you certain that you have this eternal life?

Trump says, "Make America Great Again." Theory says, "American history is tainted and needs to be revised." The Father says, "I promise eternal life to all those who are in the Son." Which one of these provides true, lasting confidence?

- (1) This truth is active (v. 18-19)
- (2) This truth has no knock-off brands (v. 20)
- (3) This truth will not allow add-ons (v. 21-23)
- (4) This truth requires proper application (v. 24-27)

Have you believed on Jesus as Lord? If you have believed, have you confessed Jesus as Lord? Are you actively growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ? How are you allowing the Spirit of God to teach you through the word? Are you on mission to help others have assurance of eternal life in Christ? What other truth claims have you allowed to be mixed with Jesus?