

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Doctrine of Christ

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John writes, “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works” (2 John 9-11).

In the 1970’s, brethren were broadening fellowship by limiting what comprised “the doctrine of Christ” in 2 John 9. Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garret and Edward Fudge were advocates of the doctrine of Christ being limited to believing that Jesus was the Christ, and the Christ had come in the flesh. Therefore, such doctrinal matters as church organization and worship of the church should not be matters that effect our fellowship. Based upon the limited view of the doctrine or teaching of Christ, these men justified their fellowship with the Christian Church Denomination and with those who worship God with mechanical instruments of music. Today, such practices as women preachers or women eld-

ers will not affect fellowship with Edward Fudge.

Recently, I heard a preacher publicly claim the same view of the doctrine of Christ as I heard Edward Fudge and others advocate twenty five years ago. But the issue prompting the discussion over the doctrine of Christ in 2 John 9 was not mechanical instruments of music in worship, but over receiving those who, in our estimation do not bring the doctrine of Christ regarding other doctrinal issues. We must therefore determine what is the doctrine of Christ. Our answer will in turn affect our fellowship.

John reasons from the specific to the general regarding “commands”. One specific “commandment” is that we “love one another” (v.5). Immediately following this specific requirement, John points us to the general law of love being demonstrated by walking that “after his commandments” (v.6). Love towards the Lord is that we not only obey the commandment to love one another, but we obey all of the Lord’s commandments. Likewise, the specific teaching that the Christ has come in the flesh is being demanded

while not ignoring the broader demand to abide in all that the Lord has taught and authorized through his apostles. John reasons from “the specific” to “the general” in verse 5-6, why not in verses 7-9?

New Testament writers use “teaching” or “doctrine” with the personal genitive, to emphasize the teaching that one does, not the teaching about oneself. We see this with the “teaching of Balaam”. John immediately adds, “who taught Balak... (Revelation 2:14). Matthew warns of the teaching arising from two sects of the Jews in the phrase “doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:12). Paul emphasizes we are to beautify all the doctrine authorized by God, not merely that which is about God in the phrase, “doctrine of God” (Titus 2:10).

Beware of those who limit the doctrine of Christ in 2 John 9. Either they are trying to justify their continued fellowship with those who no longer bring all of the doctrine of Christ, or tragically broadening the scope of Biblical fellowship.