



Sermon Growth Guide

November 9, 2025

Truth and Lies

2 John 7-13

Key Verse: “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.”

Big Idea: The Son of God left His throne in heaven, clothed Himself in flesh and sacrificed His life on the cross because He loves you infinitely. Don't let anyone steal that truth from you!

Foundations

The “elder” who writes this letter is traditionally understood to be the apostle John, and “the lady chosen by God” likewise is understood by most to be a gathering of believers that John has shepherded in some context.

John is aware that the churches over which he has oversight are being infiltrated by false teachers, and that believers are in danger of being led away from the teaching of Christ. To lose this teaching is to lose fellowship with both the Father and the Son.

This is such a serious issue that John commands believers not to welcome or take into their home any false teacher (= deceiver). He further warns that anyone who does welcome such a false teacher becomes in essence an accomplice to the spreading of a message that undercuts the spread of the true gospel.

The key to discovering what the deception is which so deeply concerned John may be found in v. 7: “... many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.” John uses the term “flesh” (sarx in Greek), not “body” (soma). What may be the significance of this?

Understanding God's Word

Together, read Matthew 2 John 7-13.

What is so crucial about confessing that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh”? Doesn't that seem rather obvious to Christians?

What do you think is behind the deceivers' teaching that Christ didn't come in the flesh? Why would John refer to such false teachers as antichrists?

Applying God's Word

How does an orthodox understanding of the Incarnation of Jesus bolster your trust in God?

Think about what it meant for the Son of God to leave the throne of heaven and stoop in humility to become a human being, destined for the cross, all because His love for you compelled Him. Meditate on what such love means for your life.

Witnessing God's Word

In the world today, there are many who have not heard the message of the gospel, but perhaps only some truncated or false form of it. You may be the messenger God uses to help a lost soul discover that we are a “visited planet” because God loves human beings so much He came to live as one of us and to give His life as a ransom for our salvation. There is no better news to share than this.

Long ago, when the earth's crust was still cooling, I was not quite a teenager. It was the late 1960s, and American culture was in a time of great upheaval—societal, spiritual, political. We were gripped by the Cold War with the Soviets, an unpopular war in Viet Nam, the Civil Rights movement, the rise of feminism, hippies, and flower power. Rebellion against authority was in the air; drug experimentation was rife, with Timothy Leary famously urging the younger generation to “Turn on, tune in and drop out.” Secularism was on the march, as evident in this then-scandalous Time Magazine cover of April 8, 1966—Is God Dead? (which elicited more letters to the editor than any cover before or since).

In the midst of all this confusion and clashing of values, many young people were hungry for direction, yearning, grasping after truth. Though I lived in Saudi Arabia, I too felt this shaking of Western culture, and at age 14 found two profound questions building in my soul: (1) Was there someone or something at the center of the universe—some Truth with a capital T—that I had to respond to with my life? And (2) Is it really possible to love others unconditionally, without any strings attached, and if so, how do I discover its secret?

In December 1967, a pop song was released and started to climb the charts. It was sung by Ed Ames, an entertainer and actor perhaps best known for his role as Mingo, the Oxford-educated Cherokee Indian who became a sidekick to Daniel Boone in the popular TV series. The song sung by Ed Ames was titled “Who Will Answer?” and when I first heard the lyrics, they haunted me, because they captured the anguish of that decade so powerfully—dealing with broken relationships, death on the battlefield, suicide and the perverse encouragement of those who cheer it on, the debilitating prison of drug addiction, and the omnipresent threat of nuclear destruction.

I think they still capture the spirit of our age: From the canyons of the mind, people wander blind through tangled nights and sunless days, searching for clues to truth and asking who will answer. Side by side, couples vow love but soon feel hollow, overwhelmed by questions of how and why. On distant hills, lives are cut short by violence, leaving cries of “Dear God, why?” unanswered. On lonely ledges, figures teeter as crowds jeer, while no one asks what led them

there. When fear darkens the soul and rules no longer fit the game, the question persists: Who will answer? In rooms heavy with sandalwood, muddled thoughts linger in rumpled beds of unmade dreams, and still the question remains. Beneath mushroom clouds, apathy reigns as planes roar overhead and the threat of a button pressed looms. Hope is sought in charms, cloisters, books, stars, or within ourselves, yet the refrain echoes—who will answer?

The cry of the human heart is to find the truth that will make sense of a world in chaos and despair. How do we discover such truth? We need the power to discern truth from falsehood. But our first problem is that though truth may be “out there,” the fog and darkness in our souls make it difficult to spot and embrace. The lyrics of this song suggest a fascinating insight: the question being posed is not “What’s the answer?” but “Who will answer?” Who holds the answer to the meaning and purpose of life?

In Revelation 5:1–5, we find a passage where a similar question is being posed, and the same anguish wells up when no one in all creation is found worthy to answer why things are the way they are and whether there is any good purpose in the future. But then, the scene dramatically shifts: “Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.’”

Who can make sense of the world and where we’re headed? The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who turns out to be the Lamb who was slain, about whom all the redeemed sing a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God people from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.” Then all the host of heaven—millions upon millions—thunder forth their adoration and praise: “Worthy is the Lamb who

was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" They bow down and worship the Lamb, who of course turns out to be none other than Jesus.

He is the only one able to answer our heart's cry. But we are slow to recognize Him, in part because our Truth sensor is so faulty. Yet there is an equally problematic barrier to finding the Truth. Our passage in 2 John highlights this issue: there are many deceivers sent out into the world to mislead those seeking truth. Behind them, whether they know it or not, is a malevolent supernatural being whose rage against God is so all-consuming that he seeks to destroy everything that brings God joy—and high upon that list is the human race, those He created in His image and likeness, the apple of His eye.

We swim in a world of lies and deceptions meant to take our eyes off the soul's True Enchanter. Every day we are bombarded with false beliefs meant to sidetrack or even sideline us. Recently, I went to get a haircut. Kim is a delightful 33-year-old gal from a small town in Wisconsin. I asked her, "What is the biggest lie you used to believe, but now know isn't true?" She said, "I used to believe that people were all kind because the town I grew up in was so small that everyone knew everyone else. But then I moved to Colorado Springs and discovered that there are some mean people in the world."

I tried the question out on others as well. Sarah, a downtown waitress in her 20s, said, "I believed that having as many virtual friends as possible would make me happy. I discovered it's much more important to have a few real, deep friendships." Ford, a waiter in his 40s, answered quickly: "The lie I believed was that government was here to help." About a month ago, I went for a dental check-up. Rachel, my dental hygienist, said her lie was that people and things could satisfy her heart. Just four days ago, I met Remi, a young woman from northern India. She entertained my question with an immediate response: "My father always told me I was a princess, and I believed him. Then I moved on my own to the U.S. and discovered I had to work to make a living. It was a rude awakening."

Perhaps you've been thinking of your own answer to that question. There are so many

falsehoods swirling about in the world around us. All of them, I submit, are the offspring of one grand lie—the first lie, the one swallowed by our first ancestors, Adam and Eve. When the Serpent questioned Eve about God's command not to eat from the tree of good and evil, she recounted that disobeying God would lead to death. Then the Serpent replied, "You will not certainly die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The devil's lie cast doubt in Eve's mind about the goodness of God. God doesn't really love you. His command is meant to hold you and Adam back from your full potential—but you can break free from His tyranny. Eat, and discover that you can become gods yourselves. That fundamental lie has led to the shipwreck of all subsequent human history: jealousy, greed, arrogance, bloodshed, misery, abuse, pollution, and moral perversion—all in the name of trying in vain to find somewhere else the fullness of life we once experienced in communion with God.

That first lie—that God doesn't love us, just wants to enslave us for His own hidden ends, that we can be independent of God and find our own ultimate happiness—is Satan's attempt to derail us. But the Gospel message is God's reply to the Great Lie. The devil tells you that you don't matter to God, that He doesn't really love you, that your disobedience will enhance your life. God says, I love you so much that I stripped off my robes of divine glory and stepped off my throne for you; I stooped down to enter your world by clothing myself in flesh and living as one of you. I came to seek and save the lost. I came not to be served but to serve and give my life as a ransom for many. How much do I love you? I came to destroy the works of the devil. My broken body and blood poured out testify against the lies of the devil.

But Satan is a master of deception, and he has kept much of the world enthralled by continually spinning lies. Jesus warned about those who embrace the devil's lies in John 8:44: "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

This passage always reminds me of a pastor who boarded a plane for a conference and happened to sit next to a trial attorney. They struck up a lively conversation about their respective work when the pastor asked the attorney how he handled closing arguments before a jury. "I've always wondered," he said, "when you're in the midst of your closing, what do you do if you make a mistake?" "Well," the attorney answered, "that depends. If it's essential to the case, I always go back and correct it. But if it's a minor error, I just let it pass." Then the attorney said, "How about you? You speak every Sunday. How do you handle mistakes you make?" "Pretty much the same as you," the pastor replied. "As a matter of fact, just this last Sunday I was preaching on John 8 where Jesus speaks of the devil as the Father of all liars. I misspoke, however, and called the devil the Father of lawyers, but the mistake was so small I just let it pass."

My apologies to the legal profession. The point is that the lies of the devil pop up everywhere, and he is especially intent on misleading people about the true gospel. The apostle John warns his readers about deceivers in their midst who are denying the foundational truth of the Christian faith: the Incarnation—that God the Son left His glory in heaven and became a full human being. Not pretending to be human, not a hologram or virtual-reality Jesus, not an apparition, but a flesh-and-blood human being, all because of love.

The key verse in our passage is v. 7: "I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist." The Greek word here for flesh is *sarx*. John doesn't use *soma*, a perfectly good word meaning "body"—a body may look human but not be human—but *sarx* means that pink stuff under the outer layer of skin, the meat that covers our skeletons. He wants to emphasize the truth that the full extent of God's love for us is shown in God actually becoming one of us so He could offer Himself as a ransom for sinners. God was not willing to "phone in" His love or text His thoughts with warm emojis. The fullness of His saving love for humanity demanded His coming in human flesh. The deceivers or antichrists are all who try to preach a different Jesus who has no power to save lost souls.

John says more about this in his first letter: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."

In the opening to his first letter, John is even more forceful about the full humanity of Jesus: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard."

He knows that followers of Christ are living in enemy territory, in the world where the devil holds sway (1 John 5:19): "We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one." But he also knows it will not always be so. Christ has called His Church to be the advance guard raiding the enemy's territory and rescuing captives—shining light into dark corners, bringing love where hate has reigned, speaking hope into despair, proclaiming truth where deception has closed eyes and ears, announcing the victory of God's Kingdom over the tyranny of death, and celebrating the triumph of the One who is Truth over all the lies of the evil one.

So, ever-vigilant against the lies of the enemy, we lift up the true Jesus, who came in the flesh, and we say, in the words of Maltbie Babcock, a Presbyterian minister who penned these words in 1901:

This is my Father's world, O let me ne'er forget.
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet. This is my Father's world,
the battle is not done. Jesus who died shall be
satisfied, and earth and heaven be one.

Amen.