

## “The Doctrine of Christ”

by Larry Ray Hafley

Some believe we may have fellowship with those who do not abide in “*the doctrine of Christ*.” If a church has a piano or organ in its worship, they will not object. If a church observes traditions of men, such as Easter and Christmas, that is alright, too. 2 John 9, though, is a problem for them. “*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*”

How do they solve this problem? They say that “*the doctrine of Christ*” is **not** the teaching of Christ; it is **not** the teaching or doctrine he taught, but it is the doctrine, or teaching, *about Christ himself*; that is, it is the teaching about the nature of Christ’s person. If one teaches contrary to the true nature and character of Christ’s person, (Christ was completely man, completely divine), then he “*hath not God.*” So, they say 2 John 9 is talking about those things and not about various points of doctrine (baptism, music in worship, proper observance of the Lord’s supper, etc.).

Which view is correct? (Would not those who say the passage is speaking about the nature of Christ have to go to “*the doctrine of Christ*,” the things Christ taught, in order to learn about his correct nature?) Perhaps the following passages will help answer the question:

- 1) Jesus referred to “*the doctrine of the Pharisees*” (Matthew 16:6, 12). Was he referring to the doctrine *about* that sect, or did he have reference to *the doctrine which they taught*?
- 2) The disciples continued steadfastly “*in the apostles doctrine*” (Acts 2:42). Did they follow the doctrine *about* the apostles themselves, or did they continue in *the teaching which the apostles made known* (Cf. Matthew 28:20)?
- 3) The Bible mentions “*the doctrines of men*” (Colossians 2:22; Cf. Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7). Are “*the doctrines of men*” doctrines *about* the nature of man, or are they *the doctrines taught by men*?
- 4) The Spirit says some will follow after “*doctrines of devils*” (1 Timothy 4:1). Does that mean they will heed teachings *about* the character of demons, or does it mean they will go *after the doctrines taught by demons* (Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 1 John 4:1)?
- 5) Jesus spoke of “*the doctrine of the Nicolaitans*” (Revelation 2:15). Was that a reference to teaching *about* the nature of the Nicolaitan people, or to *the doctrine or teaching which they did*?
- 6) When Paul said that Jesus “*was raised from the dead according to my gospel*,” was he talking about a gospel *about* himself, or was he speaking of *the gospel of Christ* (Romans 1:16)?
- 7) If one were to mention “the doctrine of Billy Graham,” would you think he was referring to teaching about Mr. Graham himself, or to the doctrine which Billy Graham taught? **Now, to what does “the doctrine of Christ” refer in 2 John 9?**

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