

Continue With the Real Jesus

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Preacher: Josh Johnston

[0:00] Good. Well, we come to our Bible reading now. And if you'd like to find in your Bibles the first letter of John, and you'll find that right at the back of the New Testament, before the books of Revelation and 2 and 3 John and Jude.

But the first letter of John, our associate minister, Josh Johnston, has been preaching through 1 John for some weeks now, and this is the final sermon in this series. And his title is going to be Continue with the Real Jesus. Now, I'm going to be reading from different parts of the letter, so do get your fingers ready to flick back and forth a little bit. But they're going to be short passages from chapter 1, then chapter 2, and then chapter 5, and I'll tell you the verses as we go along. So first letter of John, chapter 1, beginning at verse 1.

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1. 1. 1. 1. 1. 2. 1. 1. 1. 1. And there can be all kinds of reasons for that. Circumstances, work, study, etc.

[7:39] Although I would say not to take such a decision lightly ever, it should never be a small thing, a casual thing, or a straightforward assumption that uprooting from a church is going to be fine. But there can be reasons. John isn't speaking about people leaving any one local church.

He is speaking about people falling away from the apostles, hardening themselves to the gospel, ashamed of or scorning God's word, and doing so by claiming to have something better.

And so we need to be very careful in applying John's message, as if we were saying that anyone who leaves our church family is abandoning the true gospel. That isn't what John says.

And so we must not try to equate these things in simplistic ways. The departure, the falling away, the drifting John has in view is abandoning the apostles and the gospel and Jesus, not any single church, as if any one church could have the claim on the pure gospel.

However, whilst that isn't the precise situation John speaks to, such a situation of leaving a church, that could also be the beginning of or the culmination of a drift away from the true gospel.

[9:06] Turning your back on a local church family could be or could become turning your back on Jesus. And we also have to be honest with ourselves.

Remaining, continuing in a local church family isn't the same thing as continuing with the apostles and with the gospels and with the gospel. It could be that we sit week by week in church, but really our hearts are beginning to be or are increasingly being hardened.

Much like the seed in the parable of the sower that fell among the thorns. The thorns grew up and choked it and it yielded no grain.

Jesus explains that seed is those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

So John's message is a message for all of us, lest we drift away thinking we might find something better than the Lord Jesus. Something more to our liking.

[10:16] And so keeping that in mind, I want us to look again at four key things in John's letter. Four key things about life in this world. A whole world that, according to John, lies in the power of the evil one.

A world in darkness, but it's a dark world that's passing away. But whilst it is passing away, John says to us firstly, we must continue with the only true Christ.

We must continue with the only true Christ. The conflict in this letter is all around the real Jesus and alternate versions of Jesus.

Look at 2.22 that we read as one example of this. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

This is the Antichrist. He who denies the Father and the Son. We mustn't be fooled by talk of God. There will be endless amounts of people who are happy to talk about a higher power of some sort.

[11:26] Or a force behind the universe. Or some sort of vague, general, lacking in definition conception of God. We mustn't be fooled even by talk of Jesus.

When the Jesus being spoken of is clearly not the Jesus of the Bible. When we begin to hear things like, well, my Jesus would never do X or Y. We need to discern if that is simply a Jesus of someone's own imagining.

When the real Jesus enters the conversation, he is utterly divisive. It can be no other way. Because he is either the aroma of life or the stench of death.

He is either the stone of offense, the stone that was rejected. Or he is the cornerstone, the whole foundation of the life of faith. And John makes clear in this letter that there will be all kinds of people who want it to claim to be within the bounds of Christian faith.

Whilst reconstructing the very foundation of it. There will be those who love to talk about Jesus. His wonderful ministry in all kinds of ways. We have seen that from all kinds of denominational leaders, haven't we?

[12:39] In this country. Those who have abandoned the supreme authority of the Bible. But they still love to talk about Jesus' wonderful ministry to the poor. Or his wonderful healing ministry.

Or his wonderful spirit baptizing ministry. But the telltale sign of a false Christ. Is when Jesus' sin bearing work.

Is put in the shadows. Or denied. By the water only Jesus. As we saw last time. A spirit baptizing Jesus.

Who's spiritual and life-giving. Well that doesn't cause any offense. It's really rather palatable. But. A by the water and blood.

Jesus. Is a different matter. His work. His purpose in coming. His glory. Cannot be separated from his shed blood. The blood that washes clean the sins of the people.

[13:37] His people. The blood that makes us clean. And gives us life. So that we're set free from sin. And not so that we simply. And happily jump back into a life of sin.

Jesus' glory was chiefly and supremely displayed. And declared. Through his death on a cross. A death for sin. When there's distaste.

For this central aspect of Jesus' work. Then an opposing. A rival Christ. Is being spoken of. An anti-Christ. And Jesus' sin bearing death.

Is distasteful to the world. For all kinds of reasons. It has very clear implications. If Jesus' glory. Is most truly seen. In his sacrificial. Sin bearing death.

Then nothing can be more significant. About Jesus' work and ministry. Than what he has done. To be the propitiation for our sin. And if nothing is more important.

[14:37] Than Jesus dealing with sin. Then nothing is more serious. Than our sin. That he's dealing with. Sin is the great problem.

For humanity. And there'll be all kinds of contortions. Undertaken to try and change. Or obfuscate that reality. To redefine sin. To try and elevate.

Other aspects of Jesus' ministry. To focus more on talk about. A vague spirit. Or to talk a lot about God's love. A love that isn't really concerned.

With telling me that I need to change. But the way Jesus is spoken of. Throughout this letter. Is as the glorious. Resurrected Jesus.

The one who conquered death. And sin. The one who. Is the propitiation for our sins. The one who is. Our advocate with the father. The one who has appeared.

[15:31] In the heavenly realms. To destroy the works of the devil. And in his priestly role. To take away our sin. So that it can really be said. That we are definitively.

Without sin. That is Jesus' work. Now don't mishear me. John isn't saying. Christians won't commit sin. He makes that clear. In chapter one.

That people who claim such a thing. Are deceived. They call God a liar. But he does say. That the resurrected Jesus. In his high priestly role. Is advocating for us.

The whole time. And it is as if. We have Christ's perfect record. So that in a very real way. The children of God. Do not sin.

Even though that isn't obvious. Right now. Jesus glorious work. Is that he is the once for all. Sacrifice for sin. If that's denigrated.

[16:28] Or denied. Or downplayed. It's another Jesus being spoken of. And buying that other Jesus. Is falling away.

It's leaving the apostles behind. It's abandoning the gospel. That they've passed on to us. John reassures us.

The only true Christ. Is the only savior. From the overriding problem. Humanity faces. Is we don't need more than him. And we mustn't have.

Less than him. And because this is true. This becomes a truth. Which divides. The truth. Is exclusive.

It excludes all false Christs. All anemic Christs. All Christs of our own. Or our society's own invention. The only true Christ.

[17:26] Either exposes. Or encourages. John's message. Is to continue. With the real Jesus. Don't fall for another one.

Don't think there's any way. To be in a relationship. With God outside of him. Don't think that sin. Isn't a problem. Don't think that everything. Will be okay. In the end. Outside of trusting.

In the real Jesus. But be assured. Trusting in the real Jesus. Does deal with all these things. James.

James. Philip. Says. Remember that all the enemy's wiles. Are directed. Towards one objective. In the Christian's life. To get him away. From the cross.

Friends. Ignore those. All the enemy's wiles. Are directed towards one objective. To get the Christian. Away from the cross.

[18:23] Friends. Ignore those who undermine Jesus. Ignore those who diminish. The crowning glory of his ministry. Namely his. Sin bearing death. Life.

We don't need. To be like the departed. In this letter. Those who claim. To be without sin. Those who wanted to find. Another way. Those who wanted to. Redefine the gospel.

And Jesus. And sin. Sin. All that they had. Was a claim. And it was a false one. If we continue. With the only true Jesus. Then a day.

Is coming. When we will be seen. By all. To be without sin. Really. And truly. We must continue. With the only. True Christ. Well second. In this dark world. Both. The children of God. And the children of Satan.

[19:19] Have obscured conditions. Both the children of God. And the children of Satan. Have obscured conditions. The Bible makes clear. That. The Bible makes clear.

What is true of the church. And what is true of the world. Look at chapter 3. Verse 10. By this. It is evident. Who are the children of God.

And who are the children. Of the devil. Whoever does not practice. Righteousness. Is not of God. Nor is the one. Who does not love his brother. The Bible makes clear.

What is true of the church. And what is true of the world. And we need. Such objective clarity. Because reality. Won't always seem. Like what it is. Not all who.

Talk about Jesus. And claim to belong to Jesus. Really do belong. To the real Jesus. Jesus. It can be a. A discombobulating thing. To have people. Fall away.

[20 : 18] Who have spent. Who have spent many years. In a happy Christian fellowship with. We will be serving alongside. Studying the Bible with them. And it can be confusing to us. When people we have known.

As Christians. For a long time. Begin. To take aim at us. They begin to. To head. In a very different direction. Theologically. That is at odds. With orthodox Christian teaching.

Where they are increasingly. Uneasy. With things that the Bible. Makes plain. And maybe we find.

That those who. Once were dear friends. Seem to be tense. Terse with us.

Unfriendly toward us. Opposed. To us. Some will have experienced. Such things from those who now. Reject the notion of God. Completely. But it can happen.

With people who will make. A great noise. Of being Christians. Where. Identifying as a Christian. Will be prominent. In their social media profile. It won't matter.

[21 : 15] That. Every other description. Their profile. Would undermine. Such a claim. As they. Campaign for. Or promote things. Contrary to clear. Christian teaching. And of course.

Their new trajectory. Will prompt. Vitriol. Towards those. Who remain faithful. To the Bible. Of those. Backwards. Inhibited Christians. The not very like.

Jesus Christians. No. No. We've moved on. To a more nuanced faith. We look at the Bible. As 21st century eyes. And minds. And so they sneer.

At our ignorance. Or naivety. Because we take the Bible. Seriously. And plainly. When that happens.

It can be an incredibly. Unsettling thing. Can't it? And so John's concern. Is to reassure. The faithful. It isn't you. Who are getting things wrong. There are bigger realities.

[22 : 11] At play. And John reassures. By making plain. At what is going on. He goes to great lengths. To do that. To show us.

What's true. About those. Who continue. With the apostles. And also. What is true. Of those. Who once were part. Of visible church. But who have drifted away. Fallen away. Rejecting. The orthodox.

And historic. Christian faith. The reality is. That when. The Jesus of the Bible. Is abandoned. When the message. Of the apostles. Is sidelined. That isn't a small thing.

Even if it comes. With lots of still. Christian language. Giving up. On the real Jesus. Is trampling. Underfoot. The son of God. It's profaning.

The blood of the covenant. Which sanctifies us. It is to outrage. The spirit of grace. That's. Language. That Hebrews.

[23 : 09] Uses to describe. Such things. But the language. Of one John. Is equally as serious. But with perhaps. An even darker hue. John describes.

Those who drift away. From Jesus. Those who fall away. From the faith. He describes them as. Children. Of the devil. There is no in between.

So when someone. We've shared. A Christian past. With becomes hostile. Towards. Faithful Christians. When they no longer. Submit to the Bible. In all things. When they drift away. From Jesus.

Sadly. Grievously. What is going on. Is that they are. Aligning themselves. As enemies of God. Trampling underfoot.

The Lord Jesus. Profaning his blood. They belong. Not to God. But to the evil one. There is no in between.

[24 : 08] One either rejects. Jesus. Ignoring. And scorning. The apostles. And so they belong. To the world. Born of the evil one. Or one.

Is in. Relationship with the apostles. And so with Jesus. And the father. It isn't a spectrum. It's binary. It's one. Or the other.

And notice the language. That John uses. 222. As we read. Antichrists. Rival. Christ. Or in.

4.1. We didn't read it. But you can. Have a look. It's the language. Of false prophets. There will be many. Who claim. To speak the truth.

But whose work. Is to deceive. John's. Language. Around this. Is language. Of deception. Anti. Christ. Like Christ. In some way. But not him.

[25 : 05] False. Prophets. Those. Are the particular. Message to teach. But it's untrue. This age. We'll see many. Who. Masquerade.

As something. Other than they are. Many will drift. Away from Jesus. But still. Claim to belong to him. To speak for him. Obscuring. Their true condition.

And attempting. To destabilize. The church. But John. Makes it clear. To reject. Jesus. To. To fall away. From him. To refuse him.

Is to be at home. With the world. Love. And it's to be. In the family. Of the evil one. But John.

Is also. Very clear. That if we. Continue. The apostles. Or if we come. To them. Receive their gospel. If we cling. To Jesus.

[26 : 01] Or come to him. Well then. Despite present appearances. Despite what others might say. We are then. Truly. The children of God. And that won't be.

Most fully. And truly. Seen. Here and now. But it is. True. And one day. It will be revealed.

Unmistakably. We will see. We'll see.

In our next point. Once again. That our love. For one another. Gives. Sight. To the unseen gods.

Our love. Gives us. Confidence. For the last day. But there is something. About seeing.

Other people's love. Their righteousness. That spurs us on. To imitate it. Isn't there? I am sure.

Many of us. Have found that. With various things. In the Christian life. We observe.

A godly. Older. Seen. Conduct themselves. And it has. Helped us afresh. To live the Christian life.

To want. To live the Christian life. I think. For myself.

[26 : 57] In this. Hospitality is an example. When I was younger. It was all very well. For people. To tell me. That Christians. Are to be hospitable. But what does that look like? Where to start? It wasn't until I saw.

Some fine examples of this. In people in. In this church. Where they showered. Hospitality upon me. Upon others. That it clicked with me. Not only. Could I see.

What it looked like. To do it. I wanted to do. As they did. Because it was beautiful. And here's the profound reassurance. That John gives those. Who are the children of God.

Who really are. The children of God. Maybe not obviously now. But it will be one day. The reassurance is. A day is coming. When we will appear.

As what we really are. And look at the key to that. Chapter 3 verse 2. We knew that when.

[27 : 53] We knew that when he. That is Jesus appears. We shall be like him. Because. We shall see him. As he is. And as we see him.

In all his glorious perfection. In all his beauty. Far greater than any godly example. In this life. That we want to aspire to. And follow. As we see him.

We'll be transformed. Indelibly. To be like him. All is not. As it appears now. Many will masquerade. As children of God.

But those who really do. Love and trust Jesus. Will one day. Be seen. To be all that we are now. By faith. Because one day. We will see. Jesus.

And on that day. All that is obscured. Will be made plain. But until then. Don't be surprised. And don't be swayed. By those who claim Jesus. But have walked away from him.

[28 : 56] Well third. John gives us. An overriding command. An overriding command. Love. One another. Love amongst the brothers.

Keeps us in the truth. Love. The language of love. Appears throughout this letter. And also the language of hatred. Look at chapter 4. Verses 11 and 12. Beloved.

If God. So loved us. We also ought to love. One another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another.

God abides in us. And his love is perfected in us. I wonder. What your first thought is. When you think about Christian love. Brotherly love. What are the associations?

Is it a word. Or idea. Or actions. That you prefer not to think about. It's all very. Be nice to people. Kind of stuff. And I don't really like people. Or is it a vague thing.

[30 : 00] That you know you should do. Without much of a shape. Without much. Genuine motivation for it. Is it a have to. Of the Christian life. Rather than a get to. Ugh.

I guess I have to love this person. Rather than I get to love these people. Well John. Speaks very clearly about love. And it's a vital thing.

In this letter. And a vital thing. In the Christian life. When we are clear. That this world. Is enthralled to Satan. When we remember. That the whole world. Lies. In the power of the evil one.

Love. Becomes a vital thing. In the life of the church. Because with all the. The false prophets around. With the many. Antichrists. That will come. There is much.

That will try to pull people. And will pull people. Away from the truth. When the characteristic. Position of the world. Towards Jesus. And his church. Is hatred.

[30 : 57] Then love. Is all the more vital. Not just. To distinguish. Between those. Who are from God. And those. Under the power of the evil one. Although it does do that.

But because love. Is a very powerful means. Of keeping us in the truth. Have you ever thought about that? A key defense.

For the church. Against the myriad. Of dangerous ideas. From false teachers. Is that we love one another. In this dark world. Love.

Is the manifestation. Of our faithfulness. To God. And to one another. His love. Towards us. Seen chiefly. In his sin bearing death. Prompts love.

To flow out of us. And if we have Jesus. If we cherish. The real Jesus. Then we are assured. That God's love. Will. Flow out of us.

[31 : 53] It may begin. With a trickle. But we can't. Not love. When we're born of God. And John is clear. The shape of love.

Is keeping the commands. The law. That reveals to us. What love looks like. Loving God. With all that we are. And loving one another. As we'd want to be loved. But more than that.

Love shaped. By God's love. Which is what John's talking about. Is a means. Of ministering powerfully. To one another. John says. Our love gives sight.

To what is unseen. And it foreshadows. What will happen. At the last day. Look again at 412. No one has ever seen God.

If we love one another. God abides. In us. His love. Is perfected. In us. 417.

[32 : 56] By this. Is love perfected with us. So that we may have confidence. For the day of judgment. Our love gives sight. To something of the unseen God.

So brothers and sisters. Being concerned. For one another. When we are there. When we are there. When we are there. When we are there.

To support. And care for those. Who are ill and feeling. When a group rallies round. And goes to their beleaguered member. When they can't come to them. When lifts.

Are given. And meals. And all kinds of things. Are poured out in love. That is taking seriously. God's law. And giving sight. To the unseen God of love. And is a real means.

Of keeping people in the truth. When we are concerned. To maintain our brothers and sisters.

Belongings. Having integrity. With one another. And how we deal with things. When we borrow something.

[33 : 55] From someone. A car seat. For family that are visiting. Or something like that. Giving it back. In at least the same condition. As we received it. Or better even.

Than when we got it. That is taking God's law seriously. And giving sight. To the unseen God of love. It pictures life with God.

And as a real means. Of keeping people in the truth. When we protect. One another's character. And reputation. At granting generosity. And the benefit of the doubt. When unfavorable things are said.

Or witnessed. That is taking God's law seriously. And giving sight. To the unseen God of love. And it's keeping people in the truth. When we seek our own happiness.

By making others happy. Sharing our joys with others. Sharing our holidays. With those who can't get away themselves. Sharing our. Our cars with those who can't get to church. Sharing our homes. Our families.

[34 : 53] Our dining tables. With those who don't have a family of their own. That is giving sight. To the unseen God of love. When we suffer all kinds of insults.

And abuse. All kinds of opposition. And sacrifice. For maintaining the truth. In a world of lies. When we're poured out. And spent. In serving Jesus and his church.

When we've just given up. Our last free evening. In our week. Or our Saturday. To prepare a Sunday school lesson. To practice music for Sunday. All so that brothers and sisters.

Can worship the Lord. The Lord alone. Be ministered to. And assured of God's grace. That is the gospel at work within us. That is taking God's law seriously.

It is giving sight. To the unseen God of love. And that helps to keep one another in the truth. When the gospel is at work in us.

[35 : 49] Prompting and provoking love from us. That speaks of something beyond us. It pictures in small ways. What God is like. And it pictures how he will deal with us on the last day.

Our love is no small thing. It's a real means of ministering to one another. And in a world that's under the power of the evil one. A world engulfed in darkness.

Love shines like a light. Into this dark world. And the light it shines. Is the light of the world to come. Our love for one another.

Exhibits that Satan doesn't rule over this individual life. And our love for one another. Exhibits that Satan doesn't rule over this people. But rather Jesus does.

Well fourth and finally. John tells us. Makes clear. We have an overcoming confidence. An overcoming confidence. We don't need more than the gospel.

[36 : 54] Passed on to us by the apostles. And we don't need more than the gospel's fruit in our lives. To see us through to the end. The gospel is enough. Now.

The Christian faith is highly relational. And at the same time. It also makes the most exclusive and critical claims. And how easy is it for us to default to listening to and trusting people we knew and like.

Well my father says this. So that's what I think. My sister does that. So that's what I'm going to do. Or my friend recommends this.

Or swayed by this. So I'm going to give myself to that. It is good to have people we trust. Those who are godly. And have great clarity about the scriptures. It's good to lean on them at points.

To get advice and wisdom from them. But that cannot ever be the key to what we believe and think and do. Because what people claim about Jesus really matters.

[37 : 53] And if all kinds of people make claims about him. And false prophets are around. And antichrists are around. Then how can we be sure? What is the key?

What's the final word? Well there is one relationship that's key to what we believe and think and do. A relationship that must not and cannot be bypassed.

One relationship we cannot do without. And that relationship is with the apostles. Yes it's ultimately about a relationship with the Lord Jesus.

But with claims and counter claims about him. The means of knowing Jesus. Of belonging to him.

The means of cutting through all that's false. Is by listening to the apostles.

Those who saw, heard and touched the glorious resurrected Christ. If anyone knew the truth about Jesus.

[38 : 54] If anyone is to be trusted. To know Jesus. It is those who were eye, ear and touch witnesses. To all that Jesus said and did.

Chiefly. Those who witnessed his death. And his defeat. Of death. Those who witnessed him die for sin. But also defeat sin.

By being raised. By being vindicated. Well we have a God who doesn't leave us wondering. Who doesn't leave us in darkness. Yes we'll be faced with all kinds of rivals.

For the place of truth. All kinds of competing views on Jesus. And church. And spirituality. And identity. But one stands tall amongst them all. One stands true amongst them all. One stands glorious amongst them all.

The message of the apostles. The apostles bring us the truth about Jesus. But look closely at how it comes to us. Back in chapter 1.

[39 : 57] As we read. 1 verses 1 to 2. Make clear that the apostles saw, heard and touched the resurrected Lord Jesus.

And that's what they testify to and proclaim. And then look at verse 3. The purpose of their proclamation. Is that you too may have fellowship with us.

The apostles. And indeed. Our fellowship. Is with the father. And with his son Jesus Christ. That's how we have relationship with the real Jesus.

By coming under the ministry of the gospel. By receiving the gospel word. By responding in faith. To the apostolic preaching of Jesus. Don't be fooled by those.

Who say things like. Well Jesus never spoke of that. It was only the apostles. Or I only listen to Jesus. Not to Paul or John or Peter. The apostles.

[40 : 57] And their gospel. Is the means of relationship with the father and the son. And so we don't need anything new.

We don't need some fancy message. Or fancy religion with bells and whistles. We don't need to be perturbed. By those who go off. Claiming something better. Distorting.

The bible. John reassures. He says. Those who hold on to the apostles teaching. You have it all. He says in chapter 2. I'm writing to you little children. Because. Your sins are forgiven for his namesake. I'm writing to you fathers. Because you knew him who is from the beginning. That is he whom the apostles testify to.

John says. I'm writing to you young men. Because you have overcome the evil one. John says in chapter 5. This is the victory that has overcome the world. Our faith.

[41 : 58] Faith in the apostolic gospel. Faith in the real Jesus. Again in chapter 2. He says. Having the word of God abide in us. Listening to you.

And loving the apostles gospel. That. Overcomes the evil one. It seems so ordinary. So bland. So plain.

Where is the earth shattering experience? John says. It is in holding on. For dear life. To the old, old story.

And so the very last words. Of his letter. From verse 19.

We knew that we are from God. And the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we knew that the son of God has come.

[42 : 56] And has given us understanding. So that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true. His son Jesus Christ. He.

He. Is the true God. And eternal life. Little children. Keep yourselves from idols.

Don't buy it. Continue with the real Jesus. Let's pray. Gracious father.

In a world. Filled with deception. In a world. Where so many are enthralled. To the evil one. Grant us your grace. To be fertile soil.

For your gospel word. That it might bear fruit. In each and every one of us. And that it might not be snuffed out. From us.

[44 : 05] And so we ask. That you would help us. To help one another. Never let go. Of our precious saviour. The Lord Jesus. In whose name we pray.

Amen.