

Introduction

Was Judas a man of faith? The rest of the apostles thought so. The night of Jesus's betrayal, He told His disciples that one of them would betray Him. One by one, they asked Jesus, "Is it I, Lord?" (Matt 26:22; Mark 14:19). Yet, no one **asked, "Is it Judas?"** Jesus told them the one whom He gave His bread would betray Him. Jesus gave His bread to Judas and sent him away. All of the disciples concluded that Jesus sent Judas to buy food for their meal or to give money to the poor (John 13:28-29). Their naivety about Judas suggests that by all appearances, he was a man of faith.

Yet, Scripture does not paint the same picture of Judas. Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would betray Him (John 6:64). Jesus referred to Judas indirectly as "a devil" (John 6:70). Jesus said that all of His disciples were purified through Him, except Judas (John 13:10-11). He said it would have been better for Judas if he had never been born (Matt 26:24). Judas kept the money for Jesus and His disciples and regularly stole from it (John 12:6). Every indication in Scripture is that **Judas never had genuine faith in Jesus**.

How could the other disciples think Judas was a believer? Judas professed faith in Jesus, followed Jesus, sat under Jesus's teaching, ministered to people, went on mission trips, and took part in the Lord's Supper. The real question should be, why should they have ever doubted his faith?

Context

The letter of 1 John addresses the issue **genuine faith**. God is light (1 John 1:5), so what are the characteristics of those who live in God's light? God is righteous (1 John 2:29), so what are the characteristics of those who live in God's righteousness? God is love (1 John 4:8), so what are the characteristics of those who live in God's love?

1 John 1:5ff says that God is light and those who know God will have characteristics of **genuine faith**. A person who knows God will repent of sin (1 John 1:5-2:2) and obey God (1 John 2:3-6). A person who knows God will love the church (1 John 2:7-14) and will not love the world (1 John 2:15-17).

Main Idea

By appearances, Judas was a man of faith who knew God. But our relationship with God is not determined by appearances; it is determined in our hearts. **We would be more naive than the apostles if we assumed that there were not people today who profess faith and appear to know God; yet, like Judas, have unchanged hearts.** In fact, the Bible encourages believers to question the legitimacy of their faith (2 Pet 1:5-11) and encourages churches to warn one another of the possibility of false professions of faith (Heb 3:12-14).

Today, we will read 1 John 2:18-26 which describes genuine faith. This passage explains that **those who truly know God have enduring faith**. That is, if a person professes faith, lives faithfully for a time, then turns away from following God, he never had faith.

The theme of these verses is **continuing**. This passage lists **three areas of spiritual life** in which true believers will continue.

Continue in the Church

First, those who know God continue in the church. 1 John 2:18-19 "18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us." **Those who know God continue in the church.**

Last hour

What does this passage mean by “last hour?” We tend to read passages about the last days as referring to sometime in the future. Verse 18 says “we know that is is the last hour,” meaning that the last days have come. In fact, the NT frequently refers to Jesus’s first coming as the last days. Hebrews 1:2 “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ...” Hebrews 9:26 “... he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” 1 Peter 1:20 “20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.” **Jesus’s incarnation is the beginning of the last days.**

A common theme in the NT is that God’s eternal promises have already been fulfilled in Christ *and* they have not yet fully been fulfilled. **Adoption:** Romans 8:15 “.... you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons ...” Romans 8:23 “... we ourselves, ... groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” **Glorification:** Romans 8:18 “18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Romans 8:30 “30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.” **Sanctification:** Hebrews 10:10 “10 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:14 “14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” **Judgment:** John 3:18 “... whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” John 12:48 “48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.”

In the same way, **the last hour (the Day of the Lord) has come, yet we still await the coming of the Day of the Lord** (cf., 2 Pet 3:10-13).

Antichrists

Verse 18 states that the presence of antichrists are evidence that the Day of the Lord has come. *Who are the “antichrists?”* The Bible occasionally talks about a single, future antichrist (2 Thess 2:1-12). However, the Bible typically describes multiple antichrists (2 John 7; Matt 24:24). Verse 18 says there are “many antichrists.” In nearly every context that discusses antichrists, Scripture warns about false teaching. 2 John 7 “7 For many **deceivers** have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the **antichrist**.” Matthew 24:24 “24 For **false christs and false prophets** will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to **lead astray**, if possible, even the elect.” **The antichrists of 1 John 2 are false teachers that are leading people away from truth.**

They went out

Where did these false teachers come from? 1 John 2:19 “19 They went out from us ...” **These false teachers came from within the church.** Christians should not only be on guard against false teaching in the world, but also false teaching from within the church.

These false teachers had left the church, and presumably those who agreed with them. *What does their separation from the church reveal?* 1 John 2:19 “... they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.” Their separation from the church showed they were never part of the church. This means that a person can be a church member and not know God. **YOU can be a church member and not know God.**

Judas is a good example of someone who professed faith, showed evidence of faith, then turned away. Likewise, Jesus said in the parable of the soils that some would profess faith for a time, then either worldly desires or suffering drives them away (Mark 4:16-19). Those who leave the church do not **lose faith**. Leaving reveals they **never had faith**.

Those who truly know God have enduring faith. 1 John 2:18-19 states that **Those who know God continue in the church.**

Continue in Truth

Second, those who know God continue in the truth. 1 John 2:20–25 “20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 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. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.” **Those who know God continue in the truth.**

Denying Jesus

Verses 20-21 show that this letter is written to the true believers who remained in the church. Unlike those who had left the church, those who remained knew the truth.

What was the false teaching that divided this church? 1 John 2:22–23 “22 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.** 23 No one who **denies the Son** has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.” The antichrists (false teachers) described in verses 18-19 were those who denied the truth about Jesus. The person who deny Jesus (1) is a liar, (2) is an antichrist, (3) also denies the Father, and (4) does not have (or know) the Father.

Can a person have faith in God without faith in Jesus? As an example, some people claim that **Jews** worship the same God as Christians. The defense of this claim is that Jews have wrong beliefs about Jesus, but right beliefs about God. Those two statements are contradictory. If you have wrong beliefs about Jesus, you have wrong beliefs about God.

The Bible teaches that God is Triune. There is only one God (Deut 6:4; Isa 44:6; Isa 45:5; 1 Cor 8:4). The Father is God (Matt 11:25), Jesus is God (John 1:1; Phil 2:6; John 8:58), and the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; Heb 9:14; Matt 28:19). The Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are distinct from one another (Matt 3:16; John 14:16). The one true God is the Triune God. Anyone who denies any aspect of the Triune God, denies the Triune God.

Jesus said in John 5:23 “... Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” He also said in Luke 10:16 “... the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” **Those who deny Jesus, deny God.**

Jesus is the Christ

Verse 24 commands the church to continue in the teaching that had heard. *In what teaching are we to continue?* As we read in verses 20-23, we are to continue in the truth about Jesus. There are many false teachings about Jesus. 1 John 2:22 says that some deny that Jesus is the Christ (Savior, Messiah, King). 1 John 4:2 says that some deny Jesus’s humanity (cf., 2 John 7). 1 John 5:5-10 says that some deny Jesus’s deity. **Those who know God continue in the truth of Jesus.**

Why is it important to confess that Jesus is the Christ? Jesus is eternally God (John 1:1; Phil 2:6). He created everything (John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6). Jesus became a human without sacrificing His deity (Phil 2:6-8). Jesus came to save those who have faith in Him (John 3:16). As God, He bore the guilt of our sins. As a sinless human, He died in our place. As the Christ, Jesus eternally saves His people, eternally condemns those who reject Him, and eternally rules over God’s creation.

Eternal Life

Practically speaking, *why is it important that you believe the truth about Jesus?* 1 John 2:25 “25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.” **Your eternal future depends completely on one thing ... your faith in Jesus.**

Because of our sin, we are spiritually and eternally dead (Eph 2:1). However, **those who have faith in Jesus** are promised resurrection and life that begins at the moment of faith and continues eternally. John 3:16 “16 “For

God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

However, **those who reject Jesus** are promised eternal condemnation, separation from God and eternal judgment. John 3:18 “18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” God is loving, gracious, and merciful. He expresses His love, grace, and mercy to us through Jesus’s substitutionary death. **To reject Jesus is to reject God’s grace.**

Those who truly know God have enduring faith. 1 John 2:20-25 teaches that **those who know God continue in the truth.**

Continue in the Holy Spirit

Third, those who know God continue in the Holy Spirit. 1 John 2:26–27 “26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.” **Those who know God continue in the Holy Spirit.**

Anointing

What is the “anointing” described in these verses (1 John 2:20, 26-27)? Both the OT and NT suggest that this refers to the Holy Spirit. The **OT** sometimes refers to the filling of the Spirit as anointing. Isaiah 61:1 “1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;” (quoted in Luke 4:18-19; cf. Acts 10:38). The **NT** also sometimes refers to the filling of the Spirit as anointing. 2 Corinthians 1:21–22 “21 And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

The description in 1 John 2 also matches Jesus’s promise of the indwelling Spirit. Jesus said the Spirit would guide us in truth - John 16:13 “13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth ...” (1 John 2:21) He said the Spirit would testify about the truth of Jesus - John 15:26 “26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me” (1 John 2:22). He said the Spirit would teach us - John 14:26 “26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (1 John 2:27).

Taught by the Spirit

How are we taught by the Spirit? 1 John 2:27 “27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.”

This does not mean that the church does not need teachers. Acts 2:42 says the church was devoted to the Apostles’ teaching. Eph 4:11 and 1 Tim 3:2 says that God gave the church pastors for the purpose of teaching (cf. 2 Tim 2:24; Titus 1:9).

This also does not mean that God reveals new truth through the Holy Spirit. Scripture, not private revelation, is our source of truth. We judge all things through Scripture. **John Owen** said, “If private revelations agree with Scripture, they are unnecessary, and if they disagree, they are false.” Truth and Revelation are not subjective.

The Spirit teaches us through Scripture. That is, the Spirit enables us to understand and accept the truth of Scripture. For example, 1 Thessalonians 1:5 “5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.” Also, Ephesians 1:13 “13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your

salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,” **The Spirit teaches us through Scripture** (cf. Eph 6:17).

Abiding in the Spirit

Why should we abide in the Spirit? The context of abiding in the Spirit is guarding against false teaching. 1 John 2:26 “26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.” **The Spirit of God, through the Word of God, guards us against false teaching.**

How do we abide in the Spirit? The Bible suggests that our relationship with the Holy Spirit varies. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 “19 Do not quench the Spirit.” Ephesians 5:18 “... be filled with the Spirit,” We are **always indwelt** by the Spirit, but we do not always walk in the Spirit. We abide in the Spirit through reading **Scripture**. As discussed earlier, the Spirit speaks through Scripture. We abide in the Spirit through **prayer**. Ephesians 6:17–18 “... take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication ...”

Those who know God continue in the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Parable of the Soils

Jesus taught in Mark 4 (1-20) that not everyone who professes faith in Jesus truly knows God. Some profess faith, but walk away when they face suffering (Mark 4:16-17). Some profess faith, but walk away because they love the things of the world (Mark 4:18-19). *How then do we know whether we have genuine faith?*

Summary

I once had a close friend who professed faith in Jesus, was involved in the church, devoted himself to Christian fellowship, grew in his understanding of theology and Scripture, and pursued devotion to pastoral ministry. By his profession and his actions, I was convinced that he knew God.

1 John 2:18-26 teaches that **those who truly know God have enduring faith**. That is, while the strength of our faith may fluctuate, those who know God continue in repentance of sin and devotion to God. By contrast, those who do not continue in their faith (as in Mark 4), never truly had faith in Jesus.

Response

How should Christians respond to this passage? First, we should **consider whether our faith is genuine**. Are we continuing in the church, in the truth (about Jesus), and in the Holy Spirit? If you are not continuing in these things, 1 John warns that our profession of faith may not be true and we need to repent and come to Jesus in faith.

Second, we should **endure in our faith in these areas**. If your faith is genuine, then express your faith by continuing in the **church**. The church is a family that you are part of, not an event you attend. Express your faith by continuing in the **truth**. Believe the truth of Scripture, grow in your understanding of Scripture, discuss Scripture, and confront false teaching. Express your faith by continuing in the **Spirit**. Daily pursue the Spirit through reading Scripture, praying, and repenting of the sin of which the Spirit convicts you.

Those who know God have enduring faith, which is expressed by continuing in the church, continuing in the truth, and continuing in the Holy Spirit.