

***Supplemental Notes:***

*The Epistles  
of  
John*

*compiled  
by  
Chuck Missler*

## Acknowledgments

These notes have been assembled from speaking notes and related materials which had been compiled from a number of classic and contemporary commentaries and other sources detailed in the bibliography, as well as other articles and publications of Koinonia House. While we have attempted to include relevant endnotes and other references, we apologize for any errors or oversights.

The complete recordings of the sessions, as well as supporting diagrams, maps, etc., are also available in various audiovisual formats from the publisher.

## Audio Listing

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Introduction. John's background. Contrasts between John's various books. Addenda: the Most Painful Sin.

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### 1 John 2:1-14

Test of Attitude, Actions, Affection. Spiritual maturity.

### 1 John 2:15-29

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### 1 John 3

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# The Epistles of John Session 1

## 3 John

### Introduction

The early Church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was under attack from both the inside and the outside. So what has changed? It should not surprise us that the Holy Spirit has anticipated every conceivable form of attack and diversion, and these three epistles are full of insights that are timely for each of us—at the personal level as well as at the corporate.

### Background

Who was John? Brother of James “the Greater” (Mt 4:21, 10:2; Mk 1:19, 3:17, 10:35). He was probably the younger of the sons of Zebedee and Salome and was born at Bethsaida (Mt 4:21; 27:56; 15:40). His father was apparently a man of some wealth (Mk 1:20; Lk 5:3; Jn 19:27). He was doubtless trained in all that constituted the normal education of Jewish youth. When he grew up he followed the occupation of a fisherman with his family on the Sea of Galilee.

When John the Baptist began his ministry in the wilderness of Judea, John, with many others, gathered around him and was deeply influenced by his teaching. There he heard the announcement, “Behold the Lamb of God,” and on the invitation of Jesus, became a disciple and ranked among his followers for a time (Jn 1:36,37). He and his brother then returned to their former avocation (it is uncertain for how long).

Jesus again called them and now they left all and permanently joined the company of his disciples (Mt 4:21; Lk 5:1-11). For their zeal and intensity of character, Jesus named him and his brother “*Boanerges*” (“Sons of Thunder”; Mk 3:17). This spirit of *chutspah* broke out on a number of occasions (Mt 20:20-24; Mk 10:35-41; Lk 9:49, 54).

### Insider Status

He became one of the innermost circle, as at:

- Jairus’s daughter Mark 5:37
- Transfiguration Matthew 17:1
- Gethsemane Matthew 26:37
- Olivet Discourse Mark 13:3

He was “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jn 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20).

### That Final Week

At the betrayal, he and Peter followed Christ afar off, while the others betook themselves to hasty flight (Jn 18:15). At the trial he followed Christ into the council chamber, and thence to the praetorium, and to the place of crucifixion (Jn 18:16,19,28; 19:26,27). Mary was consigned to John’s care at the Cross (rather than to her other sons!). [This will be explored in the next session.]

To him and Peter, Mary first conveyed tidings of the resurrection, and they were the first to go and see what her strange words meant (Jn 20:2). After the resurrection he and Peter again returned to the Sea of Galilee, where the Lord revealed himself to them (Jn 21:1,7). We find Peter and John frequently together after this (Acts 3:1; 4:13).

### The Later Years

John remained, apparently, in Jerusalem among the leadership (Acts 15:6; Gal 2:9). He apparently was not there, however, at the time of Paul’s last visit (Acts 21:15-40). His subsequent history is unrecorded.

He appears to have retired to Ephesus, but at what time is unknown. These three epistles were probably written from Ephesus. He suffered under persecution, and was banished to Patmos (Rev 1:9), whence he again returned to Ephesus, where he died.

This was probably about A.D. 98, having outlived all (or nearly all) the friends and companions, even of his more mature years. There is some extra-Biblical evidence that he may have written his Gospel *after* the Patmos experience.

There are many interesting *traditions* regarding John’s residence at Ephesus, but these cannot claim the character of historical truth (their unsuccessful attempts at his being boiled in oil, etc.).

### The Writings of John

John wrote five books of the New Testament: the Gospel, Revelation, and three epistles. Most scholars assume that the epistles were written last, just before the close of the first century.

Distinctives of his **Gospel**: His purpose declared (Jn 20:30,31). As does his epistle, 7 times (1 John 5:13, et al.). Heptadic structure subtly evident. Distinctives of the **Book of Revelation**: Heptadic structure dominant.

## Consistency of Designations

- “Friend of God”: Abraham (James 2:23; 2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8).
- “Shall I hide from him the what I am to do?” (Gen 18:17).
  - Disciples: “Now my friends” (Jn 15:14, 15).
- Upper Room disclosures (Jn 13-17).
- “Beloved”: Daniel, Apocalyptic Visions; John, The Apocalypse.

## The Writings of John

- The Gospel of John: Distinctives.
- The Book of Revelation: Heptadic Structure.
- The Epistles of John:
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> John (to Gaius);
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> John (to “the Elect Lady”);
  - 1<sup>st</sup> John (to the church at large),

## In Retrospect

- Matthew—The Promised One is here; see His Credentials.
- Mark—This is how He worked; see His Power.
- Luke—This is what He was like; see His Nature.
- John—This is who He really was; see His Godship.

The Design of the Gospels				
	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Presents as:	Messiah	Servant	Son of Man	Son of God
Genealogy:	Abraham (Legal)	--	Adam (Blood line)	Eternal (Preexistence)
What Jesus	Said	Did	Felt	Was
To the:	Jew	Roman	Greek	Church
1st Miracle:	Leper cleansed (Jew = sin)	Demon expelled	Demon expelled	Water to Wine
Ends with	Resurrection	Ascension	Promise of Spirit: Acts	Promise of Return: Revelation
Camp Side:	East	West	South	North
Ensign:	Judah	Ephraim	Reuben	Dan
Face:	Lion	Ox	Man	Eagle
Style:	Groupings	Snapshots	Narrative	Mystical

Third John is the shortest (in the original Greek) and was written for the purpose of commending to Gaius some Christians who were strangers in the place where he lived, and who had gone thither for the purpose of preaching the Gospel (v. 7). The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Epistles were probably written (soon after the 1<sup>st</sup>?) from Ephesus.

One of the key words is “witness”: “Testified” (3 Jn 3). “Report, bear record, record” (3 Jn 6, 12) ...not just words, but by the life we lead. Every Christian is a witness, either a good one or a bad one. We are either helping the truth or hindering it (v. 8).

## 3<sup>rd</sup> John

- **Gaius, the Encourager**
  - **Service in Truth and Love** **vv. 2-8**
- Diotrophes, the Dictator
  - Five indictments **vv. 9-11**
- Demetrius, the Exemplar
  - Commendation **v. 12**
- *Each of us has the opportunity to be part of the solution or part of the problem.*

- 1] The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

“...elder”: πρεσβύτερος *presbuteros*: 1) elder, of age; the elder of two people; an elder, a senior; 2) a term of rank or office. The NT uses the terms bishop, elders, and presbyters interchangeably. [Cf. the twenty-four “elders” seated on thrones around the throne of God (Rev 4:4ff).

“...Gaius”: The 3<sup>rd</sup> epistle of John is addressed to Caius, or Gaius, but whether to the Christian of that name in Macedonia (Acts 19:29), in Corinth (Rom 16:23), or in Derbe, is uncertain (Acts 20:4).

- 2] Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

“Beloved”: John loved this man; “beloved” occurs four times (v. 1, 2, 5, 11). And he was sound in doctrine. Note the inversion: “may your physical health be as sound as your spiritual (devotional) health.” [Cf. Peter in Acts 15:11.]

To have excellent *physical* health, one must have Nutrition, Exercise, Cleanliness, Proper Rest, and the Discipline of a Balanced Life.

## Spiritual Health

- Nourishment: Word of God (Mt 4:4). What digestion is to the body, meditation is to the soul.
  - Exercise: a Godly work-out (1 Tim 4:6, 7). Gaius read it, meditated on it, delighted in it, and then practiced it daily.
  - Cleanliness (2 Cor 7:1). Avoiding the contamination and pollution of the world (2 Pet 1:4; James 1:27).
  - Rest in the Lord, fellowship with Him (Mt 11:18-30; Rev 2:4).
  - Discipline of a Balanced Life (Phil 4:5).
- 3] For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

Would that we each would have such a reputation precede us!

“As thou walkest in *the* truth”; Cf. Psalm 1:1-3. A “doer,” not just a hearer. True living comes from the Living Truth.

- 4] I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.
- He cared for all of them. “Follow-up” from the heart! John had a pastor’s heart...
- 5] Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;
- 6] Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

“...after a godly sort”: Deeds, not just words (James 2:14-16; 1 Jn 3:16-18). Worthy of God, as befits God. We are never more “God-like” than when we are sacrificing to serve others. (Second John warns against showing hospitality to false teachers: if you wish them Godspeed you are a partaker of their deeds. Here, the assumption is that intimate hospitality is restricted to believers....)

- 7] Because that for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

“...taking nothing of the Gentiles”: Never soliciting help from the unsaved. Abraham had this same policy (Gen 14:21-24). [Donation policy: a “need” is not, in itself, sufficient qualification: be sure the Lord is in it. Be wary of those generally soliciting from all that come their way. There are many “ministries” the Lord would probably shut down if the gullible would let Him!]

- 8] We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

“We ought to receive such”: Hospitality is not only an opportunity, but also an obligation. Those who receive spiritual blessings from the ministry of the Word ought to share material blessings (Gal 6:6-10; 1 Cor 9:7-11). “You pay your board where you get your food.”

“Fellow-helper”: we know not Gaius’s gift(s), but we know he was committed to assist...

If John did write these letters after the Patmos vision that makes up the Book of Revelation, then these are his “swan song.” Were all the prominent men in the early church exemplary? Hardly. Here’s a negative example...

## 3<sup>rd</sup> John

- Gaius, the Encourager  
– Service in Truth and Love v. 2-8
- **Diotrephes, the Dictator**  
– **Five indictments** vv. 9-11
- Demetrius, the Exemplar  
– Commendation v. 12
- *Each of us has the opportunity to be part of the solution or part of the problem.*

- 9] I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

“...receiveth us not”: Hospitality was a key commitment among the early Church. Peter also emphasizes it (1 Pet 4:9), as does Paul (1 Tim 5:9-10; Rom 12:13; Titus 1:8).

- 10] Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

“...prating against us with malicious words”: What a tragedy that there is so much slander and defamation within the Body! (More on this later...) Contention is evidence of pride (Prov 13:10). We must be cautious about accepting what we hear about God’s servants.

[The disturbingly frequent occurrence of “gossip” and even public slander among “Christians” is one of the most astonishing paradoxes I’ve encountered in the decade of “professional Christianity” that succeeded my three decades of an executive career in the “secular” world. I have included some notes on this most hurtful sin in an addendum...]

There is a fatal disparity between rejecting *doctrine* and false teaching and rejection of the brethren with whom we may have a divergent view. This indicates:

- 1) An insecurity; John was a threat to his station; he certainly wouldn’t be looking forward to John’s threatened visit! (v.14).
- 2) That Jesus wasn’t preeminent in his life.

We *do* need to be diligent to have no fellowship with apostates (as we reviewed in 2 Peter and Jude studies); and should refrain from entangling alliances with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14ff).

- 11] Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

They that do evil can include pulpits, authors, and TV and radio commentators...We should also avoid those whose doctrinal position is *contrary* to Scripture (Rom 16:17-19). [This doesn’t mean we cooperate only with those who interpret Scripture precisely as we do; there are many areas where good scholars have divergent views; it’s the fundamentals that count.] John’s other two epistles will stress this point, (one in a surprising way!).

## John’s 5 Indictments

- 1) He must occupy the leading place in the church;
- 2) He actually refused to receive the Apostle John;
- 3) **He made malicious statements against the apostles;**
- 4) He refused to extend hospitality to the missionaries;
- 5) He excommunicated those who *did* receive the missionaries!

Know any like this? Self-opinionated; self-exalting (rather than self-effacing); self-made; self-sufficient; self-willed; self-satisfied; self-confident... In a word, in the flesh!

He, ostensibly, was the first exalted ruler of the Church. When he dies, wisdom will die with him. Such can wreck a church. (And don’t overlook the presence of a Mrs. Diotrephes, too!) Even among the disciples, there were excessive aspirations (Mt 18:1ff; vs. Phil 2:1ff).

Preeminence is reserved for Jesus Christ Himself (cf. Col 1:18; also, cf. Jn 3:30: “He must increase; I must decrease”). The Greek verb is in the present tense, active voice: indicates that this was the *constant attitude* of Diotrephes to promote himself.

*In essentials, unity; In non-essentials, liberty; In all things, Agape.*  
—Augustine

## 3<sup>rd</sup> John

- Gaius, the Encourager  
– Service in Truth and Love v. 2-8
- Diotrephes, the Dictator  
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- **Demetrius, the Exemplar**  
– **Commendation** v. 12
- *Each of us has the opportunity to be part of the solution or part of the problem.*

- 12] Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

“Demetrius”: Here is an exemplar, an example worthy to be imitated. One of the tragedies of our present period is the *lack of role models*. (Cf. Phil 3:17; 1 Cor 11:11; Heb 10:24).

However, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Lk 6:26). It may mean that we are compromising and/or masquerading.

Gaius and Demetrius walked in truth and obeyed the Word of God. They certainly weren’t “perfect,” but they had *consistent* lives, seeking to honor the Lord.

- 13] I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:  
14] But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

*Peace is the possession of adequate resources.*  
—George Morrison of Glasgow



The believer can enjoy peace because he has adequate resources in Jesus Christ (Phil 4:6, 7, 13, 19).

What a blessing it is to have Christian friends! When Paul arrived near Rome, some of the brethren went to meet him, “whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage” (Acts 28:15).

## Next Session

This letter was personal, to the individual, about problems from inside his church. The next letter, 2 John, was to “the elect lady,” about false teachers from the outside who would appeal to love so that they might deny the truth.

## Addendum:

### The Most Painful Sin

What sin has probably caused more pain than any other?

*Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*

Leviticus 19:16,17

In its formal form, it is a violation of a commandment written in stone by the finger of God!

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

Exodus 20:16

*He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth. He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise. The tongue of the just is as choice silver: the heart of the wicked is little worth.*

Proverbs 10:17-20

## Gossip

Gossip is a form of betrayal and is probably accountable for more personal pain and suffering than most of us have any appreciation of. Common, casual, yet hurtful beyond our imagining. Quietly, behind the flurry of daily priorities, its venom does its silent work, undermining confidences, betraying relationships, spreading unseen injustices...

It is disturbing to note how many of us have been injured—deeply—by gossip and by those who accept, without checking, negative or derogatory innuendos whispered behind our backs.

What an opportunity to display loyalty, love, and, by assuming the most charitable construction, *in advance*, demonstrate the foundation of a relationship!

The tongue is a ready and willing instrument to talk about our neighbor behind his back (Cf. Rom 1:30; 2 Cor 12:20; James 4:11).

*For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:*

2 Corinthians 12:20

*A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.*

Proverbs 11:13

*The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*

Proverbs 18:8

*He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.*

Proverbs 20:19

*Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.*

Proverbs 26:20

*As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.*

Proverbs 26:21

*The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*

Proverbs 26:22

The “Christian” Approach: “I don’t want to gossip. However, in order that you might pray more specifically for \_\_\_\_\_, let me tell you the latest . . .”

*This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he*

*heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*

John 8:6,7

## What Is a True Friend?

One who doesn't require explanations. One who gives the benefit of the doubt. One who is loyal and shuns any form of betrayal...

## A Poem: "I Hear It Said..."

Last night my friend—he says he is my friend—  
Came in and questioned me.  
“I hear it said you have done this and that.  
I come to ask are these things true?”  
A glint was in his eye of small distrust.  
His words were crisp and hot.  
He measured me with anger,  
and flung down a little heap of facts had come to him.  
“I hear it said you have done this and that.”

Suppose I have? And are you not my friend?  
And are you not my friend enough to say,  
“If it were true, there would be reason in it.  
And if I cannot know the how and why,  
Still I can trust you, waiting for a word,  
Or for no word, if no word ever come!”

Is friendship just a thing of afternoons,  
Of pleasuring one's friend and one's dear self—  
Greed for sedate approval of his pace,  
Suspicion if he take one little turn  
Upon the road, one flight into the air,  
And has not sought you for your Yea or Nay!

No. Friendship is not so. I am my own.  
And howsoever near my friend may draw  
Unto my soul, there is a legend hung  
Above a certain straight and narrow way  
Says “Dear my friend, ye may not enter here!”

I would the time has come—as it has not—  
When men shall rise and say, “He is my friend.

He has done this? And what is that to me!  
Think you I have a check upon his head,  
Or cast a guiding rein across his neck?  
I am his friend. And for that cause I walk  
Not overclose beside him, leaving still  
Space for his silences, and space for mine.”

—Barbara Young

## Next Session

Study 2 John. Who is “the Elect Lady”? Read John 19:25-27.

## The Epistles of John Session 2 2 John

### Introduction

The early Church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was under attack from both the inside and the outside. So what has changed? It should not surprise us that the Holy Spirit has anticipated every conceivable form of attack and diversion, and these three epistles are full of insights that are timely for each of us—at the personal level as well as at the corporate.

### Express Purpose of John's Ministry

*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

John 20:30,31

### Background: Ephesus

Ephesus was the capital of proconsular Asia, which was the western part of Asia Minor. It was colonized principally from Athens; in the time of the Romans it bore the title of “the first and greatest metropolis of Asia.”

It was distinguished by the Temple of Diana, whose chief shrine was there; and for its open-air theater which was the largest in the world, capable of containing 50,000 spectators. Many Jews took up their



residence in this city, and here the seeds of the Gospel were sown immediately after Pentecost (Acts 2:9; 6:9).

## Paul's Ministry

Paul first visited Ephesus at the close of his second missionary journey (about A.D. 51) when he was returning from Greece to Syria (Acts 18:18-21). He remained, however, for only a short time, as he was hastening to keep the feast, probably of Pentecost, at Jerusalem; but he left Aquila and Priscilla behind him to carry on the work of spreading the Gospel. During his third missionary journey Paul reached Ephesus from the inland parts of Asia Minor, and tarried there for about three years (Acts 19:1).

So successful and abundant were his labours that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10). On his return from his journey, Paul touched at Miletus, some 30 miles south of Ephesus (Acts 20:15). Sending for the presbyters of Ephesus to meet him there, he delivered to them that touching farewell charge which is recorded, and in which he warned them in Acts 20:18-35:

*For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

Acts 20:29-31

Indeed, there was a rise of false teachers (the “Gnostics”) that emerged subsequently.

## John's Ministry

This is the very situation that John is dealing with in his letters. (*Ephesus was also prominent as the first of the seven churches in Revelation, which John had received while in exile on Patmos. They, by then, however, were apparently quite diligent regarding doctrine, but had “lost their first love.”*)

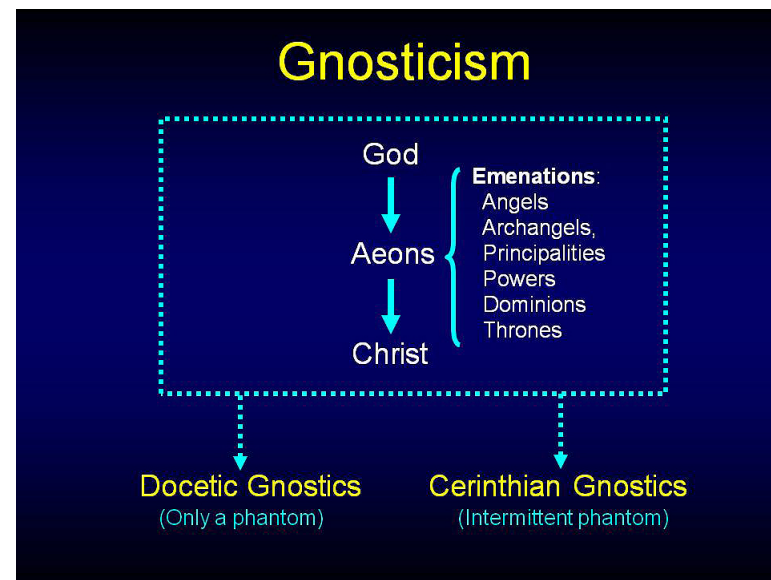
The apostle John, according to tradition, spent many years in Ephesus, where he died and was buried.

## Gnosticism

This letter is a response to the Gnostics (Greek: *Gnosis* = knowledge). A mixture of mysticism, Eastern speculations and Jewish legalism. Alexandria was a major headquarters. Huxley coined the term “*agnostic*” = “without knowledge”; (Latin = *ignoramus*)! Paul: *Epignosis*, “superknowledge”! (Col 1:9).

- Eastern speculations + mysticism:
  - Man-made traditions and philosophy (Col 2:8);
  - Matter was evil (Col 1:16);
  - Astrology: angelic beings associated with heavenly bodies (Col 2:10,15).
- Plus, a form of Jewish legalism:
  - Good and evil were derived from rules (Col 2:21);
  - Circumcision (Col 2:11);
  - OT dietary laws (Col 2:14-17).

These heresies promised people “spiritual perfection” if they entered into the teachings and ceremonies prescribed. This “depth” and “full knowledge” could only be enjoyed by those initiated, etc. These were all based on man-made traditions and philosophy, not on divine Truth (Col 2:8).



The gnostics came to the false conclusion that matter was evil; that a powerful spirit world used material things to attack mankind. They held to a form of astrology, believing that angelic beings associated with heavenly bodies influenced affairs on earth (Col 1:16; 2:10, 15). Added to these Eastern speculations was a form of Jewish legalism: the idea that the rite of circumcision was helpful in spiritual development (Col 2:11); and the OT dietary laws were also helpful in attaining spiritual perfection (Col 2:14-17). Good and evil were derived from rules and regulations (Col 2:21).

## Docetic Gnostics

The Docetic (from δοκεω, “to seem”) Gnostics held that Jesus did not have a real human body, but only a phantom body. He was, in fact, an aeon and had no real humanity. These views were increasingly prevalent in Ephesus (and elsewhere) and form the challenges that John was dealing with in this letter, and in his sermon known as “1 John.”

## Cerinthian Gnostics

The Cerinthian (followers of Cerinthus) Gnostics admitted the humanity of the man Jesus, but claimed that the Christ was an aeon that came on Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove and left him on the Cross so that only the man Jesus died.

Some thought that Jesus was “just a man”—similar to Christian Science and other phases of “New Thought.” Paul deals with this heresy directly. [Others held that Jesus was only spiritual, not material; John also deals with these in his three epistles.]

At once this heresy sharpened the issue concerning the Person of Christ already set forth in Philippians 2:5-11. Paul met the issue squarely and powerfully portrayed his full-length portrait of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Son of Man (both deity and humanity) in opposition to both types of Gnostics. So then Colossians seems written expressly for our own day when so many are trying to rob Jesus Christ of his deity.

These errors are important to understand since these attacks on the deity of Christ are just as prevalent today as then. Each cult group involves a strategy to misrepresent some aspect of revealed truth in regards to Christ and His redemptive work.

These views undermined the very foundations of the Christian faith, and attacked the person and work of Jesus Christ. To them, He was

but one of God’s many “emanations” and not the very Son of God, come in the flesh. The Incarnation means “God *with us*” (Mt 1:23), but these false teachers claimed that God was keeping His distance from us! When we trust the Son of God, there is no need for any intermediary beings between us and heaven!

## The Age of Syncretism

These false teachings were a combination of many things: Jewish legalism, Oriental philosophies, pagan astrology, mysticism, asceticism, with a touch of Christianity. Here was “something for everybody”—an attempt to harmonize and unite many different schools of thought into a composite religion. These teachers claimed that they were *not* denying the Christian faith, but only lifting it to a “higher level.” Do we have any of these heresies today? Indeed, and they are ever more dangerous!

## Nothing “New” in the “New Age”!

Every modern erroneous cult is some ancient Satanic heresy revived. Every “new” heresy has been anticipated by the Holy Spirit. Satan has nothing new to offer. We live in a day when religious toleration is interpreted to mean “one religion is as good as another.” Many people try to take the best from various religions and fabricate their own. To them Christ is only one of several great religious teachers, with no more authority than they have. He may be prominent, but certainly not *preeminent*.

When we make Jesus Christ and the Bible only a *part* of a total religious system or philosophy, we cease to give Him preeminence. When we strive for “spiritual perfection” or “fullness” by means of formulas, disciplines, or rituals, we go backward rather than forward.

We must beware of mixing our Christian faith with such alluring things as yoga, transcendental meditation, Oriental mysticism, and the like. We must also beware of the “deeper life” teachers who offer a system for victory and fullness that bypasses devotion to Jesus Christ. In all things, He must have preeminence!

## The Epistles of John

3 <sup>rd</sup> John	written to Gaius.
2 <sup>nd</sup> John	written to “the Elect Lady.”
1 <sup>st</sup> John	written to the church at large.

## Introduction to 2 John

First John is more of a sermon than the typical letter. We are leaving it to the last as the climax of the series. The message of John's second epistle is essential to having a proper perspective of what he has said in his first epistle.

It is rather remarkable how timely these letters are for *today*: The cultural war being waged in our country has deep spiritual significance—far beyond simply cultural or political philosophies.

Both 2 John and 3 John are short, individual, personal letters. We don't know the order that the three were written; many assume they were written after John's exile at Patmos. It would seem that 2 John was written to the same community as 1 John, but at an earlier date (since the false teachers evidently still had access to the church in 2 John, but had seceded from it in 1 John (1 Jn 2:19).

Furthermore, by the time of Patmos, Ephesus was diligent in doctrine, but had "lost their first love" (Rev 2:1-7). False teachers not only invaded the churches, they also tried to influence Christian homes. It is significant that the pagan left continually embarks on a militant campaign against the family.

As goes the home, so goes the Church and the nation. The family is an important target in Satan's war against truth.

The Second Epistle of John may also be the most neglected book of the NT. (And if one of my suspicions proves correct, it may also harbor one of the biggest surprises!)

## 2 John

- 1] The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;

Who is "the elect lady"? This identity is the primary mystery of the letter.

### Who is the "Elect Lady"? ἐκλεκτῇ κυρία

κυρία = Feminine proper name? ἐκλεκτῇ is strange, never assigned to any other individual in the NT as a single predicate (except in Rom 16:13, "chosen in the Lord").

- 1) The view of κυρία taken as a symbolic description of the Christian Church has occurred consistently since as early as Jerome [*Ep. Xi. Ad Ageruchiam*]; later Calovius, Whiston, Michaelis, Augusti, Hofmann (Weissagung u. Erfüllung, II. P.321, and Schriftbew., I. P.226ff); Hilgenfeld (1855), Ewald, Candlish, Barnes, Huther, etc. Also, more recently, Harris, Marshall, Plummer, Stedman, Vines, McGee, Wiersbe, Walvoord, and other modern commentators.]

The view of believers as "children of the Church" may have been comfortable for Jerome, et al., for ecclesiastical reasons, but it flies in the face of Scriptural usage.

We are "children of God," not "children of the Church." The Church is presented as a virgin (2 Cor 11:2) and the bride (Jn 3:29; Rev 18:23; 21:2, 9; 22:17; cf. Eph 5:22-27).

It is also significant that this word does not appear elsewhere in this signification. The further allusion to the sister (v.13) would seem fatal to this view, but for the preponderance of expositional history.

## The Alternative Assumption

- 2) An individual, probably a prominent lady in the Church.

This seems clear from a straight-forward reading. The writer knows her sister and her sister's children (v.13). *This view would make this the only book in the Bible specifically addressed to a woman.*

It is true that John uses a plural (vv. 6, 8, 10, 12) and an individual (vv. 1, 4, 5, 13). The fact that he embraces others as well in passing doesn't alter the intended addressee. The family of the "Elect Lady" is clearly in view.

## A Provocative Conjecture

- 3) Who would be the *most* "Elect Lady" in the entire Bible?

To me, the most likely *prima facie* suggestion is that the recipient of this intimate letter is the most "elect" of all women, the very one that Jesus Himself entrusted to John's personal care: Mary, the mother of Jesus (Jn 19:26, 27) and she did have a sister (v. 13; Jn 19:25). This view, however, is not even discussed among modern commentators. [Except Knauer: Stud. U. Krit., 1833, Part 2, p.452ff; q.v. Huther, J. E., *Critical and Exegeti-*

*cal Handbook to the General Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude* (translated from the German) (11 vols.), Funk and Wagnalls, 1884.]

Most Biblical believers, from their revulsion to the tragic and heretical deification of Mary by the Roman Catholic Church, tend to dismiss her and ignore her situation and predicament. [We cannot miss the dismissive allusion at her prompting during the wedding at Cana (Jn 2:4).]

We know so little of her subsequent history from the Scriptures: there are minimal allusions in the Book of Acts (1:14). She apparently remained in the care of John in his retirement in Ephesus. (This conjecture would indicate that 2 John would have been written earlier than A.D. 90, since Mary would have been about a century old by then.)

Most of what is commonly published by the Roman Catholic Church has been contrived by subsequent Popes to promote their doctrinal heresies, etc.

The “Elect Lady” is loved “*by all they that have known the Truth.*” Who else could this fit? This, too, seems to point to far more than simply a prominent personage within the local church! If this suspicion is correct, it places an entirely unique complexion on the letter, and also provides a number of significant insights.

- 1] The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;
- 2] For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

“...and her children”: This should make the case unequivocal: Mary's sister was also at the cross when John was called to take Mary under his provision (Jn 19:25-27).

“...whom I love in the truth...”: Most expositions of this letter highlight the prominence of “truth,” in concert with “love” as the keynote of the letter. John uses the word “Truth” 5 times in the first 4 verses. He uses the word “love” 4 times.

*Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.*

Hosea 4:1

If you take love away from truth, you don't have Christian love. Real love always operates within the sphere of truth.

## What Is Truth?

As Pilate's cynical question still echoes... Jesus' declaration is conclusive and comprehensive: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (Jn 14:6). Here “the Truth” suggests a personal appellation: The Truth “dwells in us” and “shall be with us forever.” John is using it as a title of Jesus Christ, just as he so often uses the *Logos*, The Word (Jn 1:1-3, 14; 1 Jn 5:7; Rev 19:13).

It is astonishing to observe our institutions now denying the very existence of that which they were founded to discover. As if  $2 + 2 = 4$  is subjective and subject to debate. In any case, Truth is unchangeable. “What is true is not new; and what is new is not true.”

- 3] Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Grace? Mercy? Love? [Could you write a short reflective paper on the distinctives *between* them?] Ephesians 2:4-5 combines all three:

*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved...*

Ephesians 2:4,5

Grace is getting what we don't deserve; Mercy is not getting what we do.

*Love is that in God which existed before He would care to exercise mercy or grace.*

—Lewis Sperry Chafer

*It is interesting that love never saved a sinner. The love of God caused God to move in the direction of mercy and grace; it caused Him to exercise mercy and grace.*

—J. Vernon McGee

*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

Romans 3:16

Salvation is not only an expression of the love of God; it is also an expression of the justice and righteousness of God.

Grace: “God's Riches At Christ's Expense.”

— Hal Lindsey

...Son of the Father”: It is suggestive that in v.3 John emphasizes that Jesus’ paternity—“Son of the Father”—to the recipient. This is another of those passages that links—and equates—the Father with the Son.

The paternal emphasis in v.3 would have had very specific implications for Mary. Can you imagine the burden Mary had to endure throughout her entire adult life from the cloud of the ostensible illegitimacy that was imputed to her first pregnancy? (Cf. The aspersions cast in John 8:41. Jesus *then* discusses *their* parentage in 8:44! Cf. The childhood insights of Ps 69:7-12.)

*Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.*

1 John 2:23

*I and my Father are one.*

John 10:30

*Before Abraham was, I AM.*

John 8:58

In each of these instances, the leadership understood what He was claiming: they tried to stone Him for blasphemy. Furthermore, this was the specific indictment for which they crucified Him (Mt 26:63-66).

It is astonishing that so many are unaware of the numerous claims of Jesus’ Godship! (Even the august pseudo-scholars of the Jesus Seminar seem willing to ignore who they are really dealing with! Perhaps, if they cast enough votes they hope He’ll resign!)

- 4] I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

“...of thy children”: Jesus was raised in a family of (at least) seven: five sons and two sisters (Mt 13:55, 56; Mk 5:3). James and Jude became believers after the resurrection; in fact, they each wrote books in the NT that bear their names. Jesus appeared to James after His resurrection (1 Cor 15:7). The Greek actually indicates “some of thy children” rather than all of them (Jn 7:5). If our surmise is correct—and it is only a surmise—some of the others also became believers.

“...walking in truth”: The issue here, as in all these letters, is that love and truth must be practiced: “walked.” “To walk in the truth” means to obey it. It is easier to study the truth, or even argue about the truth, than it is to obey it. Knowing the truth is more than giving assent to a series of doctrines; it means that the believer’s life is controlled by a love for the truth and a desire to magnify the truth.

- 5] And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

“...from the beginning”: The recipient was not a latecomer: she was there “from the beginning” (cf. vv.5 & 6 ). The “we” carries a provocative joint identity.

“...love one another”: Love is a commandment. *If ye love me, keep my commandments* (Jn 14:15). Real love is a choice, not an emotion. I choose to love you. When I obey, I do what God tells me to do. [For a practical guide, see Nan’s book, *The Way of Agape...*]

- 6] And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

We should not presume that any of us are beyond the need for exhortation or encouragement. Why would Mary—a very blessed but very human believer—be any exception? Mary was subject to the same frailties as all of us: pride and doubts, and thus also needed frequent encouragement, counsel, and, perhaps, exhortation.

A tendency toward pride would certainly be her serious challenge: the most blessed of all women who had ever walked the earth! Think about it. What would be her “thorn in the flesh”? (cf. 2 Cor 12:7-9). Both truth and love can be perverted.

[In view of the onslaught of the Gnostic heresies and doubts may well have brought unique challenges for Mary, especially!]

## Mary (in Perspective)

Simeon’s hymn followed: “a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed”; a testing probation of character to her as well as to all others (Jn 9:39; 19:25; Ps 42:10).

Dismissiveness (Mt 12:46f): Her misgivings and doubts is implied during accompanying His brethren, as if enthusiasm was carrying Him too far (Mk 3:21,31-35; Jn 7:5).

- 7] For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Here is a clear response to the prevalent Gnostic teachings. They were teaching that Jesus Christ was not really a person, just a phantom. When



He walked He didn't leave a footprint! (This is partially Scriptural! Mt 14:25ff; Mtk 6:48ff; Jtn 6:19ff!)

"...is come": It is surprising that the present (continuous) tense is used: Jesus Christ had come and still exists "in flesh." In the first chapter of John's Gospel, he emphasizes,

*And the **Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

John 1:14

In his sermon we call 1<sup>st</sup> John, he opens with a similar emphasis:

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, **and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...***

1 John 1:1

The Pharisees were the conservatives of Jesus' day; the Sadducees were the liberals. Both were in trouble. However, the Sadducees were the greatest enemies that Christ had and were the main instigators of the first persecution of the Church.

The Pharisees with the Sadducees were the leaders of the persecution of the Lord Jesus. But after the death of the Lord, most of the Pharisees dropped the whole affair. They lost interest in persecuting Him or His followers; in fact, many of them became Christians (Acts 3 & 4).

A Pharisee named Nicodemus was converted, as were many priests obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). There is no account in Scripture of a Sadducee ever coming to Christ for salvation. *The acid test of the Sadducees was the resurrection, as it is today among the "liberals."*

The prevalent Gnostic teachings would have had a disconcerting problem for Mary. (Why would she have been immune to doubts and misgivings?)

"...an antichrist" should be "the"! The Greek, ο ἀντίχριστός, has the definite article. The prefix "anti-" actually means "instead of"; the modern use emphasizes "against." Both are, of course, true. (It is noteworthy that John himself does not use this term "antichrist" in the Book of Revelation.)

- 8] Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

"...we lose not": Even Mary could lose her "reward"! None of us should take anything for granted. We cannot lose that which Jesus completed; but we can fail to retain that which "we have wrought," those things which derive from our own faithfulness. Every believer ought to be working for a reward, and be able to hear Him say, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant*" (Mt 25:21). [Cf. *The Kingdom, Power & Glory* and its associated studies.]

- 9] 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.

John was not one to suggest that all religious teachings are true in one way or another, and that we should not be critical just as long as people are sincere. To John, there was a deadly difference. He that hath not Christ hath not God.

"...transgresseth": παραβαίνω *parabaino*: to go beyond the limits; to go past as to turn aside; thus, to extend beyond the pale of orthodoxy. This is the characteristic of every cult. They always have some new information or insight that goes beyond the clear and express doctrines of God. Every cult finds a new way to deny the deity of Jesus Christ.

"...abideth": Even Mary, of all people, may have had particular difficulties in this area. In any case, she certainly would have been drawn into the raging controversies over the real nature of Jesus. Incidentally, "abide" means to remain; it is intended to be a permanent arrangement.

- 10] If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

Let us also remember that hospitality—especially in those rough times—was extremely critical to the ministry. The "hospitality industry" of motels and related services came later. The inns of those early days were neither safe nor adequate. Traveling pastors or teachers needed homes to stay in (3 Jn 5-8).

## Hospitality

Paul stayed in the home of Aquila and Priscilla when he was in Corinth. The situation is quite different today. In fact, most traveling speakers



prefer the privacy of commercial accommodations for study and prayer, which is rarely equivalent when one is being received in a private residence, however well intended.

Christians are admonished to open their homes to visitors (Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:3-10; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:8-10). But the context here can be considered providing respite to itinerant speakers: We must not let the poison of false doctrine get into our home.

There is a colorful legend concerning John's attitude toward a notable heretic in Ephesus: a cultist and false teacher by the name of Cerinthus, who taught that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary, not God come in the flesh. One day at the local bath house, when Cerinthus arrived, John jumped out of the water, got his clothes and towels, and took off running, and exclaimed, "Let us hurry from this house, lest it fall on us. Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is here!" [Should a Christian pick up a hitchhiker?]

11] For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

"...God speed": This is a disturbing caveat for all of us! "Goodbye" means "God be with you"; it is a petition for God's blessing and sanction.

## False Teachers

John did not want any of God's children to:

- 1) Give a false teacher the impression that his heretical doctrine was acceptable;
- 2) Become infected because of association and possible friendship; and,
- 3) Give the false teacher ammunition to use at the next place he stopped.

John is certainly admonishing us to not receive or encourage false teachers representing anti-Christian groups. This is another grave reason that you should investigate everything you give to as a Christian, because if you are giving to the wrong thing, God considers you a partner in it.

*[Is v. 10 a general principle? Or was it a particular injunction for Mary as one who could inadvertently clothe heresy with the mantle of her approval?]*

12] Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

This could be simply an allusion to intimacy and imminancy; or it could be a precaution to disclosure(s). David said a similar thing: "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Ps 45:1).

## Shorthand Writer

Note: Psalm 45:1, the Hebrew, מִכָּתֵב קֹפֵץ the "ready writer" (KJV), or "skillful writer" (NIV), is translated in the Greek Septuagint, ὀξυγράφος *oxygràphos*, a synonym for *tachygràphos*, or "shorthand writer."

The technical term must have been common enough among Greek-speaking Jews in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. for its use in the Septuagint to have any purpose. This is one of the reasons we believe Matthew wrote shorthand: it was required for his profession as a customs official.

13] The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

This verse also argues for the addressee to be a specific individual. (Yes, Mary did have a sister; Jn 19:25.)

## The Marian Apparitions

The deification of Mary by the Roman Catholic Church represents far more than simply a heterodox departure from the Biblical faith. In addition to be a blasphemy on the deity, role, and person of Jesus Christ, this pagan contrivance appears to be the continuing vehicle for the execution of strategic demonic activities of the most sinister sort.

## Ultimate Ecumenicalism?

Mary could also prove to be the common element uniting the religions of the world... The Catholics (& ECT, et al.); The Muslims—Muslims believe Mary is one of the great women of Islam, and Jesus as a prophet. "The Chapter of Mary," *Surah Maryam*, in the Qur'an, speaks about Mary (Maryam) and Jesus (Isa) in Islam; and The New Age (Mary and the Gaia community, et al.).

## The Marian Apparitions

Most Protestant observers tend to dismiss the sequence of sightings and encounters with what purports to be the Virgin Mary as simply hallucina-

tions, hoaxes, or incidents of well-intentioned religious hysteria. While some of these incidents may well be, there are a significant number of them that evidence clear supernatural involvements and deserve our serious caution! For instance, **The Visions at Fatima**, 1917, in Portugal on May 13 and October 13 by three children; 70,000 witnesses.

## Next Session

Read First John. Highlight the key ideas in the first chapter.

## The Epistles of John Session 3

### 1 John 1

## Introduction

The early Church in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was under attack from both the inside and the outside. So what has changed? It should not surprise us that the Holy Spirit has anticipated every conceivable form of attack and diversion, and these three epistles are full of insights that are timely for each of us—at the personal level as well as at the corporate.

## Consistency of Designations

- “Friend of God”: Abraham (James 2:23; 2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8).
- “Shall I hide from him the what I am to do?” (Gen 18:17).
  - Disciples: “Now my friends” (Jn 15:14, 15).
- Upper Room disclosures (Jn 13-17).
- “Beloved”: Daniel, Apocalyptic Visions; John, The Apocalypse.

## The Writings of John

- The Gospel of John: Distinctives.
- The Book of Revelation: Heptadic Structure.
- The Epistles of John:
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> John (to Gaius);
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> John (to “the Elect Lady”);
  - 1<sup>st</sup> John (to the church at large).

## In Retrospect

- Matthew—The Promised One is here; see His Credentials.
- Mark—This is how He worked; see His Power.

- Luke—This is what He was like; see His Nature.
- John—This is who He really was; see His Godship.

## Key Verse

*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

John 1:11, 12

## “As Many as Received Him”

- |                            |            |
|----------------------------|------------|
| • Peter, Nathaniel, et al. | Jn 1:35-51 |
| • Nicodemus                | Jn 3:1-21  |
| • Sychar woman             | Jn 4:6-26  |
| • Man born blind           | Jn 9:35-41 |
| • Martha & Mary at Bethany | Jn 11      |
| • Eleven Apostles          | Jn 13-14   |
| • Mary Magdalene           | Jn 20      |
| • Peter                    | Jn 21      |

## The Confrontation

*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

John 8:56-59

## “I AM that I AM”: Exodus 3:14

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| • I AM the Bread of Life            | Jn 6:35,41,48,51 |
| • I AM the Light of the World       | Jn 8:12          |
| • I AM the Door of the Sheep        | Jn 10:7,9        |
| • I AM the Good Shepherd            | Jn 10:11, 14     |
| • I AM the Resurrection and Life    | Jn 11:25         |
| • I AM the Way, the Truth, the Life | Jn 14:6          |
| • I AM the True Vine                | Jn 15:1, 5       |

## The Pre-Existent One

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made*

by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:1-3

## The Incarnation

*And the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

John 1:14

## The Final Horseman

*And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war....And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

Revelation 19:13, 15

## Consistency of Designations

- “Friend of God”: Abraham (James 2:23; 2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8).
- “Shall I hide from him the what I am to do?” (Gen 18:17).
  - Disciples: “Now my friends” (Jn 15:14, 15).
- Upper Room disclosures (Jn 13-17).
- “Beloved”: Daniel, Apocalyptic Visions; John, The Apocalypse.

## Review: 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle of John — To the Elect Lady

*The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.*

2 John 1,2

Who is “the Elect Lady”? Who is the most “elect” of all women? To whom did Jesus consign the care of His mother? (Jn 19:26, 27). Why not her own other sons?

“...whom I love in the truth, but also all they that have known the truth” (2 Jn 1) “that which we had from the beginning...” (2 John 6).

*And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*

Luke 1:28

## Some Observations

- Frustrated with Jesus at 12                      Lk 2:48
- Dismissive allusion at Cana                      Jn 2:4
- Thought Jesus needed care                      Mk 3

- Consigned to John:  
(He, too, had a pushy mom!)                      Mt 20:21f
- She, too, needed the Holy Spirit                      Acts 1:14

*These observations alter the entire tone of the epistle! Mary suffers from both 1) the heretical deification of the Roman Catholics, as well as 2) the dismissal of the Protestants...*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle of John

- **Practical: Walk in Love**
  - The Divine insistence on love                      vv. 4, 5
  - The Human expression of love                      v. 6
- **Doctrinal: Watch Against Error**
  - Warning against false teaching                      vv. 7-9
  - Warning against false charity                      vv. 10,11
  - Parting comments                      vv. 12, 13

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Epistle of John

- Gaius: Service in Truth and Love                      vv. 2-8
- Diotrephes: Evil by pride and strife                      vv. 9-11
- Demetrius: Commendation                      v. 12
  - Parting words                      vv. 13,14

## 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle of John

- John's Gospel: Our **past**                      Salvation
- John's Letters: Our **present**                      Sanctification
- John's Revelation: Our **future**                      His Glorious Appearing

1 John has been called the *sanctum sanctorum* of the New Testament. It takes the child of God into the fellowship of the Father's home.

*Paul's epistles, and all the other epistles, are Church epistles; but this is a family epistle. It may prove more important to the individual believer than all the Church epistles!*

Life is real. It is a battleground, not a playground. If a person is wrong about Jesus Christ, he is wrong about God; if he is wrong about God, he is wrong about everything else.

## Seven Contrasts: Truth versus Error

- |                |                    |                |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| • The Light    | vs. The Darkness   | 1 Jn 1:5-2:11  |
| • The Father   | vs. The World      | 1 Jn 2:12-2:17 |
| • Christ       | vs. the Antichrist | 1 Jn 2:18-2:28 |
| • Good Works   | vs. Evil Works     | 1 Jn 2:29-3:24 |
| • Holy Spirit  | vs. Error          | 1 Jn 4:1-4:6   |
| • Love         | vs. Pious Pretence | 1 Jn 4:7-4:21  |
| • The God-Born | vs. others         | 1 Jn 5:1-5:21  |

## The Seven Tests

- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| • Of Profession  | 1 Jn 1:5-2:11  |
| • Of Desire      | 1 Jn 2:12-2:17 |
| • Of Doctrine    | 1 Jn 2:18-2:28 |
| • Of Conduct     | 1 Jn 2:29-3:24 |
| • Of Discernment | 1 Jn 4:1-4:6   |
| • Of Motive      | 1 Jn 4:7-4:21  |
| • Of New Birth   | 1 Jn 5:1-5:21  |

## Heptadic Structure

- Seven Traits of the Born Again (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1 (2X), 4, 18).
- Seven Reasons why this epistle written (1 Jn 1:3, 4, 2:1, 13-17, 21-24, 26, 5:13).
- Seven Tests of Christian genuineness (1 Jn 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9, 4:20).
- Seven Tests of Honesty and Reality (1 Jn 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9; 4:20).
- [Six Liars: 1:6; 1:10; 2:4; 2:22; 4:20; 5:10]

## Six Liars

- 1) If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (1 Jn 1:6).
- 2) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His truth is not in us (1 Jn 1:10).
- 3) He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 Jn 2:4).
- 4) Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son (1 Jn 2:22).
- 5) If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 Jn 4:20).

- 6) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made God a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son (1 Jn 5:10).

## The Spiritual Fundamentals

- |                                   |               |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| • All-inclusive commandments:     | 1 Jn 3:23     |
| – We believe on Jesus Christ      |               |
| – That we love one another        |               |
| • A Profession of love for others | 1 Jn 3:17, 18 |
| • Father's sacrificing the Son    | 1 Jn 4:10, 11 |
| – Love's last word                |               |
| • Perfect love casteth out fear   | 1 Jn 4:18     |

## 1 John 1

- 1) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

There is no “Greeting”: this is for all of God’s people everywhere...

John opens with a strong declaration of the *reality of Christ*, which was heard, seen, gazed upon, and handled.

“...heard” is in the present tense: began in the past, and still continues!

“...seen”: with physical eyes.

“...looked upon”: gazed upon, viewed attentively, intensely studied, contemplated; (θεάομαι *theaomai*, the word from which we get the word theater). [As Israel gazed upon the Brazen Serpent; cf. Num 21:8; Jn 3:14.]

“...handled”: Cf. Luke 24:39.

## The Deity of Christ

All this is a firm rebuttal to the myths of the Gnostics, who, in various styles, denied the tangible existence of the Christ.

“...the Word”: Only John uses, as a title, “the Word”; here, the Word of Life (Jn 1:1-3, 14; 1 Jn 5:7; Rev 19:13). Jesus is the noun of God; the verb of God; and adjective of God. When you look at Jesus you see the Love of God and the holiness of God.

## Three “Beginnings” in Scripture

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

Genesis 1:1

Nachmonides & Maimondes: matter, energy, time and space, all had a “beginning.” *The great discovery of 20<sup>th</sup> century science was the acknowledgment that the universe did, indeed, have a beginning!*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

John 1:1

Jesus Christ is coexistent, coeternal, and coequal with God (Jn 12:45; Heb 13:8). The Pre-existent Christ: “that which was [already] from the beginning....” “Truth = when the word and the deed become one.”

- 2] (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

Christ is also real historically: “manifested” — to appear, made visible (Cf. 1 Tim 3:16; Jn 1:14). The Christ of reality is also real experientially. Real Christianity is a personal experience with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a deadly difference between church membership and salvation—knowing *about* Jesus and knowing Him are not the same.

- 3] That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

“...fellowship”: Here we encounter one of the greatest words in the Bible: κοινωνία *koinonia*, fellowship; a close mutual relationship; participation; partnership; communion; fiduciary. Sharing something together.

It is two-dimensional: *horizontal*: fellowship with one another; and *vertical*: with God the Father.

There are two families in this world. Jesus said, “Ye are of your father the devil” (Jn 8:44). You can’t “join” the family of God: you must be born into it (Jn 3:3ff).

## Fellowship

When you are born into the family of God, you become part of the greatest fellowship in the world (Cf. Phil 1:5; 2:1; Acts 2:42). But the

astonishing aspect of our fellowship is *vertical*: with God. He talks to you (through His Word); you talk to Him (through prayer). [Is your communication with God half-duplex or full-duplex?]

“...with us”: Caveat—“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” (2 Cor 6:14). Friendship, yes. Fellowship, no. [To marry someone who is lost is to commit to a lifetime of grief...]

- 4] And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

“...your joy may be full”: John wants your joy to be full, not half-full (Ps 16:11). [This is one of the seven reasons why this epistle was written (see “Heptadic Structure” summary).] Do you have joy today? Most people have just enough religion to make them *miserable*.

## Joy

The most joyous truth in our hearts is to know that Jesus Christ is our personal Savior, that our home is in heaven, and that we have a special reason for living.

One of the reasons many Christians have such little joy is that they don’t study their Bible! Jer 15:16 can start your pilgrimage to joy.

*[One of the greatest tragedies in our culture is that our youth has been denied this reality by the theories and conjectures that it is bombarded with in our schools and entertainments, etc.]*

*Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.*

Jeremiah 15:16

The more you digest, the more you understand. The more you understand, the more you can digest (Cf. Rev 10:9,10). It’s the ultimate gourmet meal! [Heb: thy name is called upon me.]

Some manuscripts translate “our joy” instead of “your joy.” Either way, it’s a wonderful truth. Soul winning is, too, a fulfilling joy. “Ye are our glory and joy” (1 Thess 2:20).

- 5] This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

“...God is light”: This is the basis of our fellowship. We need to understand His terms for fellowship.



[Later, we'll also note that God is love (1 John 4:8). This is the basis of our sonship.]

## God is Light

- “The Lord is my light and my salvation” (Ps 27:1).
- God dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim 6:16).
- “Let light be” is God’s first quote in the *Torah*.
- The *Shekinah* glory was a cloud of light.

Light also represents *knowledge*. And the information sciences, we have recently discovered, are the fundamental behind everything: from particle physics (and the DNA) to the cosmos.

*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

Hebrews 11:3  
cf. Psalm 19:1-4

Morally, light represents His holiness. Light reveals. “*There is not no darkness in God.*” ( In Greek, the double negative is an emphatic.)

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

James 1:17

[“Variableness” is the translation of parallax, parallage, or parallax: parallel rays from light, which is, mathematically, at infinity.]

*In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

John 1:4, 5

*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved [agapao!] darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

John 3:19

Man, however, is unholy. That’s the problem (cf. Rom 7:18; 3:10; Job 9:33; Isa 55:8).

*Secret sin down here is open scandal in heaven.*

—Lewis Sperry Chafer

*Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

John 8:12

Our concept of God will ultimately determine the kind of life we live. If we have a low concept of God, then we will live a low life. If we have a high concept of God, we will be challenged to live a high and noble life. [*Look at the kind of leadership of our founding fathers of this country, and contrast it with the more recent times...*]

The unspoken criticisms: Why is it that most Christians are not alert, well informed, stable, dependable, alive, etc.? Why are so many untrustworthy, critical, harsh, repelling and negative? If God is light, and He can do all this, why does it seem to happen to only a few?

- 6] If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

This is the first of three professions that are betrayed by our actions:

- “If we say we have fellowship...” v.6
- “If we say we have no sin...” v.8
- “If we say have not sinned...” v.10

What does it mean, “to walk in darkness”? It means to walk in sin and disobedience; it means to practice things that are contrary to the holiness and light of God.

Relationship puts us into the family of God. Fellowship is experiencing Christ; it permits the life of the family to shine out through us. God is holy. He cannot, and will not, tolerate sin. If you are living in sin, God will not have fellowship with you.

*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...*  
Habakkuk 1:13

A condition of our fellowship is that it must stand in the light of Him: His ways; His terms. When you say you are in fellowship with God, you are saying, “I have stepped out of darkness and into the light.”

*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:*

Colossians 1:13



John is attacking a heresy that was rampant in his day—as well as ours! People were saying that it was possible to be in fellowship with God and to be in sin at the same time.

*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

Amos 3:3

At Abraham's offering of Isaac, that precursor on the very spot of the ultimate offering of the Father's Son at Golgatha, the Hebrew text indicates that "both of them went together in agreement" (Gen 22:6, 8).

John is saying that if we claim we are walking in fellowship while walking in darkness, we are living a lie. Among other things, we misrepresent our Lord; and we also misdirect the lost.

**Darkness:** Most of us assume that darkness is simply the absence of light. That is not quite a complete picture. ["God divided the light from the darkness" (Gen 1:4).] There are such things as "black holes": dense concentrations from which no light can escape!

"Darkness" attracts darkness; and wallowing in it long enough can make escape virtually impossible. How do you "turn off the light"?

- By skipping church; "neglecting to meet together" (Heb 10:24, 25).
- By stopping daily Scripture reading.
- Failing to spend time with Him (we learn of Him through the Word; we gain our relationship with Him in our devotional life).
- Failing to take frequent personal spiritual bearings.
- Failing to correct "dead reckoning" with periodic reliable bearings to account for drift....
- *Denial also works. Pretending everything is okay is presumptuous and self-deceiving.*

- 7] But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

If I am going to walk in the light, it means to hide nothing. If I am going to walk with God, I am going to have to know His likes and dislikes. It's His call! [Just like any good servant, we need to know His preferences and "buying habits."]

*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light...*

1 Peter 2:9

*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light...*

Ephesians 5:8

There is a difference between profession and practice. We need to "walk the talk." Cf. Mt 7:21, 22.

"...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleaneth us from all sin": The cleansing blood...without shedding of blood is no remission (Cf. Heb 9:22; Lev 17:11). Cf. This was taught very early (Gen 3:21; Cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 1:18-19). The blood is peace-giving (Col 1:20); conscience purging (Heb 9:14); prevailing (Rev 12:11) and cleansing (1 Jn 1:7) [Present tense: *it goes on cleansing* in addition to the once-and-for-all redemptive act for all time and eternity at the Cross.]

- 8] If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

It is essential to note the difference between "sin" and "sins." Here, in v.8 it is singular, the genetic defect that is the root of our problem. Sin is that in man which makes him want to play God on every occasion; we want the world to revolve around us; it is our innate self-centeredness, called pride, selfishness, self-will.

In v.9 it will be in the plural: the specific fruits of this root problem. *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper* (Prov 28:13). Let's not quibble about what is a sin. God has made it clear; our reinterpretations notwithstanding. So what should we do with them?

- 9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

"If we confess": *ομολογέω homologeo*, to say the same thing. (*Logeo*, "to say"; *homo*, "the same.") We are to say the same thing that God says. That is, from His point of view. We need to acknowledge our ownership of our sin. We need to commit to forsake our sin.

But let's not be general, or include "conditionals" like "If we have ...." etc. Let's be specific, and admit ownership to the entire list. And let's include "forsaking" in our prognosis and commitment. Repentance involves more than regret: it includes a commitment to *turning* from our sin.

Yet, it's *His* faithfulness that is the key! Forgiveness (that's judicial); and cleansing (that's hygienic).

10] If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

It is remarkable to discover how many false cults deny the reality of the existence of sin: Christian Science, Unity School of Christianity, Religious Science, et al. Also it is a prominent feature of non-Christian religions such as Theosophy, Hinduism, and Buddhism. They all teach that sin does not really exist.

Even the field of psychology, while acknowledging that guilt is at the core of most “mental illness,” can only treat the symptom, not the cause. Sin is the cause; guilt is but a symptom.

## Our Escape

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

1 Corinthians 10:13

Are you making God a liar? Be careful about that!

The practical application of all this is simple and direct: go to Him and talk with Him as you do to no one else. Tell Him your problems. Tell Him your sins (be specific). Tell Him your weakness(es); lay it all out on the line. Ask Him to forgive, cleanse, strengthen...and be serious about it. Whenever we sin, we have an accuser, a prosecuting attorney who demands the death penalty because of our sin (cf. Rev 12:10).

## Next Session

But 1 John 2 says we have an advocate to plead our case. This will be reviewed next. Read 1 John. Study Chapter 2:1-14. *Sin need not reign any more!*

## The Epistles of John Session 4 1 John 2:1-14

1 John has been called the *sanctum sanctorum* of the New Testament. It takes the child of God into the fellowship of the Father's home. *Paul's epistles, and all the other epistles, are Church epistles; but this is a family epistle. It may prove more important to the individual believer than all the Church epistles!*

Life is real. It is a battleground, not a playground. If a person is wrong about Jesus Christ, he is wrong about God; if he is wrong about God, he is wrong about everything else.

## Seven Contrasts: Truth versus Error

• The Light	vs. The Darkness	1 Jn 1:5-2:11
• The Father	vs. The World	1 Jn 2:12-2:17
• Christ	vs. the Antichrist	1 Jn 2:18-2:28
• Good Works	vs. Evil Works	1 Jn 2:29-3:24
• Holy Spirit	vs. Error	1 Jn 4:1-4:6
• Love	vs. Pious Pretence	1 Jn 4:7-4:21
• The God-Born	vs. others	1 Jn 5:1-5:21

## Six Liars

- 1) If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (1 Jn 1:6).
- 2) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His truth is not in us (1 Jn 1:10).
- 3) He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 Jn 2:4).
- 4) Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son (1 Jn 2:22).
- 5) If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 Jn 4:20).
- 6) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made God a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son (1 Jn 5:10).

## The Spiritual Fundamentals

• All-inclusive commandments:	1 Jn 3:23
– We believe on Jesus Christ	
– That we love one another	
• A Profession of love for others	1 Jn 3:17, 18
• Father's sacrificing the Son	1 Jn 4:10, 11
– Love's last word	
• Perfect love casteth out fear	1 Jn 4:18

## Introduction

John was writing during a time when the very deity of Christ was a major issue within the Church. As it is today! It is interesting to see how

timely the Scriptures are for us in our own times. Yet John's words are intimate and personal; he is writing to the individual believer, and with some very specific purposes in mind. Are you really saved? How do you know? Are you sure? It is not enough to *claim* that you are saved.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Matthew 7:21-23

The Bible teaches that Christians can know that they are saved.

*For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.*

2 Timothy 1:12

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life...*

1 John 5:13

The word "know" is used 39 times in this book: it refers to experiential knowledge. Chapter 2 opens with this same emphasis.

## 1 John 2

- 1] My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

"My little children": Τεκνία *Teknia*... "my little born ones" or "my little born-again ones;" like the Scottish term, "my little bairns."

"...that ye sin not": Reason #3 (of 7) of why this epistle was written.

Seven Reasons (1 Jn 1:3, 4; 2:1, 13-17, 21-24, 26; 5:13): Fellowship; joy; now: to prevent sin. The Bible nowhere says that a Christian is sinless, but it does teach that a child of God ought to **sin** less. Less today than yesterday... We can never lose our sin nature which we were born with but we need not obey its desires (1 Jn 1:8).

"advocate": παράκλητος *parakletos*, is the same word John used for the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7); our Paraclete, our Comforter, "the one called alongside." We actually have two! Jesus finished His work

on earth, and is presently interceding for us before the Father's throne (Jn 17:4 Heb 7:25). He is our defense attorney. We have an aggressive adversary against us, "the accuser of our brethren" (Rev 12:10).

- 2] And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

"...propitiation": the satisfying of God's holy law. In Romans the word is *ἱλαστήριον* *hilasterion*, mercy seat. Here, *ἱλασμός* *hilasmos*, a means of appeasing, a propitiation.

God is light; He cannot close His eyes to sin. But God is love, and wants to save sinners.

*It may be that Deity can forgive sinners, but I do not see how.*

—Socrates, to Plato

How can God uphold His own justice and still forgive sinners? The answer is *through the sacrifice of Christ*. God Himself paid the penalty.

The Book of Romans is the definitive study on sin, its penalty, and its remedy: GRACE: God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

"Not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." This is a refutation of the concept of "limited atonement" (Calvinism); cf. John 3:16. All He asks is that when we have failed we confess our sins (1 Jn 1:9). We need to manifest a serious and committed attitude that is consistent with *God's view* of sin.

- 3] And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

This verse has nothing to do with the security of the believer. John is talking about *assurance*.

"...keep": τηρέω *tereo*: to guard something carefully, as one would guard a treasure. The "commandments" do not refer to the Ten Commandments. (Those are for the unsaved!) God has special commandments for His family:

*For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 4:2

*Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6:2

Over 22 times in 1 Thessalonians 5: Rejoice evermore; Pray without ceasing; Quench not the Spirit; et al.

We can obey... because we *have to* (as a slave), because we *need to* (an employee), or because we *want to* (a love commitment).

If one is really saved, it is not simply a claim: it will result in an attitude of obedience in his/her heart. Obedience is the very basis of our assurance.

This chapter includes the first of a series of tests. His phrase “he that saith” introduces a series of tests by which we can know beyond a doubt that we are a child of God. This occurs in v.4, v.6, v.9.

- 4] He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

“...is a liar”: The 3<sup>rd</sup> of 6 “liars.” (1 Jn 1:6; 1:10; 2:4; 2:22; 4:20; 5:10). *Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!* [Sir Walter Scott]. The life that is real cannot be built on things that are deceptive. Before we can walk in the light, we must know ourselves, accept ourselves, and yield ourselves to God.

- 5] But whoso keepeth his Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

“...whoso keepeth his Word”: In v.1 he speaks of His commandments, in general; here, His Word. His Word is more than just commandments.

*An unchanged life is the sign of an unchanged heart.*

—Charles Spurgeon

*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

Amos 3:3

Our “keeping” is an attitude of the heart, not a score card or checklist. In this is the love of God perfected, completed in its goal. Have you taken the measure of your own spiritual inventory? What is your attitude toward sin? Are you in complete harmony with your Father’s attitude toward sin?

- 6] He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

“...even as he walked”: Talk and walk should coincide.

*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:*

1 Peter 2:21

*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*

Ephesians 5:1

## Followers

μιμητής *mimetes*, mimmic, imitator. We don’t become Christians by following Christ’s example; but after being born into His family, we aspire to follow His example as our perfect pattern by abiding—staying connected as a branch does to the vine—in fellowship with our source.

John walked the talk. And it was not always thus. Jesus had nicknamed the two brothers, *Boanerges*, “Sons of Thunder” (Mk 3:17). On one occasion, these two brothers wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy a village! (Lk 9:51-56).

## Test of Affection

“I love peanut butter.” “I love my wife.”

Words, like coins, can be in circulation for such a long time that they start wearing out. The word “Love” has lost its precision—and its depth—in our culture; it does, indeed, “cover a multitude of sins”!

The Greek has four words for “love”:

- *Storge*: Affection love, as a parent toward a child;
- *Phileo*: Friendship love; having things in common;
- *Agape* (noun): God’s unconditional love; [vs. *Agapao*, the verb: totally given over to];
- *Eros*: Sensual, sexual, love (not in NT).  
(Even the Greeks clearly understood that it was essential that *eros* be bridled or restrained.)

## John’s Three Contrasts

As John describes a life that is real, he uses three words repeatedly: *life*, *love*, and *light*. Read three sections separately: 1 John 2:7-11; 1 John 3:10-24; and 1 John 4:7-21. It will become clear that love, life, and light cannot be separated:

- 1) Christian love is affected by *light and darkness* (1 Jn 2:7-11).
- 2) Christian love is a matter of *life or death* (1 Jn 3:10-24).  
To live in hatred is to live in spiritual death.

- 3) Christian love is a matter of *truth or error* (1 John 4:7-21) because if we know God's love toward us, we show God's love toward others.

In these three sections we have three good reasons why Christians should love one another:

- 1) God has commanded us to love (1 John 2:7-11);
  - 2) We have been born of God and God's Love lives in us (1 John 3:10-24);
  - 3) God first revealed His Love to us (1 John 4:7-21).
- 7] Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

When Jesus was asked which is the first commandment, He quoted the Sh'ma—Deut 6:4, 5 (with Lev 19:18 as an addition):

*And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

Mark 12:29-31

- 8] Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

John 13:34,35

In what sense, then, is “love one another” a new commandment?

The Greeks had two different words for “new”:

- 1) νέος *neos*, “new in time”; latest model;
- 2) καινός *kainos*, “new in quality”; radically different; (our English “recent” and “fresh” are rough equivalents).

The commandment to “love one another” is not new in time, but it is new in character. In Christ it now takes on a new meaning as we learn in this section of five brief verses: 7–11: new in Emphasis, v.7; new in Example, v.8; and, new in Experience, vv.9-11.

Christ was the perfect example. He never showed hatred or malice. He hated sin and disobedience, but He *never hated the people who committed such sins*. He was patient with Peter's impulsiveness, Thomas's unbelief, and even Judas's treachery. Even at the Cross, He prayed for those that crucified Him: “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

- 9] He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.
- 10] He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.
- 11] But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

“...darkness”: Put a flower in darkness and it will shrivel. We become like the gods we worship (Ps 115:8; 135:18). Christian love is not an appendage: it is the very essence of the Christian experience. Without love, the Christian life is *nothing*.

### “...One Another” Statements in NT

- |                                      |              |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| – Wash one another's feet            | Jn 13:14     |
| – Prefer one another                 | Rom 12:10    |
| – Be of the same mind one to another | Rom 12:16    |
| – Do not judge one another           | Rom 14:13    |
| – Receive one another                | Rom 15:7     |
| – Admonish one another               | Rom 15:14    |
| – Edify [build up] one another       | 1 Thess 5:11 |
| – Bear one another's burdens         | Gal 6:2      |
| – Confess your faults to one another | Jas 5:16     |
| – Use hospitality one to another     | 1 Pet 4:9    |
| ...and a dozen others.               |              |

What happens to a believer who does not love the brethren? He lives in darkness (though he may think he is living in the light); 1 Jn 2:9. He is living a lie. He becomes a cause of stumbling (1 Jn 2:10). It retards a believer's spiritual progress (1 Jn 2:11).

- 12] I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

“...little children” τεκνίων *teknion*, little child; Scottish, *bairn* ones. From a verb: to bring into existence. *Ye must be born again* (Jn 3:7).



*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

1 Peter 1:23

*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

James 1:18

The basis: because of what Jesus has done. That is the basis of our forgiveness. But birth is only the beginning of life:

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

2 Peter 3:18

*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ...*

Ephesians 4:15

You say you're born again? What have you done with it? Your "fruit bearing" will be evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10).

- 13] I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

Reason #4: To overcome the Wicked One (because ye have known Him).

"...little children" (different word than v.12): παιδίον *paidion*, infants in the Lord; immature little ones.

## Spiritual Pediatrics

Normal babies: self-centered; need nurturing;

- Lack of normal growth = retarded.
- Maternity wings are not intended to be rest homes.

[1 Cor 3: they claimed to be spiritual; were actually retarded; their growth was less, abnormal.]

"...young men": νεανίσκος *neaniskos*, adolescent. They were strong (commanded); Eph 6:10. [Are you in a soul-building program? Who is your trainer?] "The Word of God abideth in them." All mature Christians are "Bible Christians."

"...wicked one": Two words of "wicked" in NT: here, πονηρός *poneros*, from which we get pornography. It means peril, pain, trouble; in the physical sense, diseased or blind; in the ethical sense, evil, wicked, or bad. Here it refers to those who are not content to go down the drain by themselves, but want to pull someone else down with them.

## Spiritual Maturity

- 14] I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

"Fathers" (vv. 13 & 14) refers to spiritual maturity. They have known Him from the beginning. A father is capable of procreation: he can reproduce himself. [Are you a spiritual parent?]

A father is capable of confrontation: *I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you* (1 Cor 4:14).

"warn": νοουθετέω *noutheteo*, means "to speak to the heart of"; "admonish." (A father is also an example.) *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me* (1 Cor 4:16). There is μιμητής *mimetes*; again: imitators. [What is the Gospel according to you?]

## Next Session

Read 1 John; study 1 John 2:15-29—The World: *God made the world and all the things therein* (Acts 17:24). *God so loved the world...* (John 3:16). Yet, we are cautioned to "love not the world"! (1 John 2:15). Which is it?

## The Epistles of John Session 5 1 John 2:15-29

### 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle of John

- |                      |                    |                        |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| • John's Gospel:     | Our <b>past</b>    | Salvation              |
| • John's Letters:    | Our <b>present</b> | Sanctification         |
| • John's Revelation: | Our <b>future</b>  | His Glorious Appearing |

### The Seven Tests

- |                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| • Of Profession | 1 Jn 1:5-2:11  |
| • Of Desire     | 1 Jn 2:12-2:17 |



- Of Doctrine 1 Jn 2:18-2:28
- Of Conduct 1 Jn 2:29-3:24
- Of Discernment 1 Jn 4:1-4:6
- Of Motive 1 Jn 4:7-4:21
- Of New Birth 1 Jn 5:1-5:21

## Heptadic Structure

- Seven Traits of the Born Again (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1 (2X), 4, 18).
- Seven Reasons why this epistle written (1 Jn 1:3, 4, 2:1, 13-17, 21-24, 26, 5:13).
- Seven Tests of Christian genuineness (1 Jn 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9, 4:20).
- Seven Tests of Honesty and Reality (1 Jn 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9; 4:20).
- [Six Liars: 1:6; 1:10; 2:4; 2:22; 4:20; 5:10.]

## Six Liars

- 1) If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (1 Jn 1:6).
- 2) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His truth is not in us (1 Jn 1:10).
- 3) He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 Jn 2:4).
- 4) Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son (1 Jn 2:22).
- 5) If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 Jn 4:20).
- 6) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made God a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son (1 Jn 5:10).

## The Spiritual Fundamentals

- All-inclusive commandments: 1 Jn 3:23
  - We believe on Jesus Christ
  - That we love one another
- A Profession of love for others 1 Jn 3:17, 18
- Father's sacrificing the Son 1 Jn 4:10, 11
  - Love's last word
- Perfect love casteth out fear 1 Jn 4:18

The Bible teaches that Christians can know that they are saved.

*For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day*  
2 Timothy 1:12

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life...*

1 John 5:13

The word “know” is used 39 times in this book: it refers to experiential knowledge. This session opens with this same emphasis.

## 1 John 2:15-29

- 15] Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

*God made the world and all the things therein.*

Acts 17:24

*God so loved the world...*

John 3:16

Yet, here we are cautioned to “love not the world”! (1 Jn 2:15). *Which is it?*

The World = κόσμος *kosmos* [“to bring order out of chaos”; ...cosmetics!] = system: “the world of sports, finance,” et al.

Physical world, earth (Acts 17:24); Human world, mankind (Jn 3:16). Both together (Jn 1:10). Spiritual system opposed to God.

## The World

...Satan's system of opposition to Christ... the very opposite of what is godly (1 Jn 2:16). “The whole world lies under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19, ISV).

Satan is the “Prince of this world...” (Jn 12:31); ...an organization (Eph 6:11-12). Four reasons why Christians should not love “the world”:

- 1) because of what the world is;
- 2) because of what a Christian is (1 Jn 2:12-14–review);
- 3) because of what the world does to us (1 Jn 2:15-16);
- 4) because of where the world is going (1 Jn 2:17).

Unsaved people, whether they believe it or not, are energized by “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the chil-

dren of disobedience” (Eph 2:1-2). Unsaved belong to “this world” (Lk 16:8). When Jesus was here on earth, the people of “this world” did not understand Him, nor do they now understand those of us who trust Him (1 Jn 3:1).

A Christian is a member of the human world; he lives in the the physical world, but he does not belong to the spiritual world that is Satan’s system for opposing God (cf. Jn 15:18).

*Saints: A group of displaced persons, uprooted from their natural home, and on their way to an extraterrestrial destination; not of this planet, neither in its roots nor in its ideals.*

—Donald Grey Barnhouse

Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20). [Cf. Scuba diver: the Holy Spirit is our special equipment for survival in a hostile environment...]

*Friendship with the world is enmity with God* (James 4:4). (However, only as a Christian grows spiritually does he overcome the world.)

## Review: 1 John 2:12-14

Four forms of address: 1) Little children (“bairn ones” τεκνίον *teknion* v.12); 2) Fathers; 3) Young men; 4) Little children. All Christians have been born into God’s family through faith in Christ, and are “bairn ones.”

v.13] “Fathers” πατήρ *pater*: Mature believers with an intimate personal knowledge of God—they know the dangers of the world.

v.14] “Young men” νεανίσκος *neaniskos*: Adolescents; here, conquerors: they have overcome the evil one. How? through the Word of God (v.14. Eph 6:17. Not yet fully mature; but on their way).

v.13] “Little Children,” not those in v.12; a different Greek word is used: παιδίον *paidion*, carries the idea of immature ones, still under authority of teachers and tutors...eg. all are “bairn”ones, but some have grown out of infancy into manhood and adulthood.

It is the growing, maturing Christian to whom the world does not appeal; the things of the world are but toys: “...when I became a man, I put away childish things...” (1 Cor 13:11). Worldliness is more of an attitude than activity; it is a matter of the heart. To the extent that a Christian loves the world system and the things in it, he does not love the Father.

## 1 John 2

16] For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

The world system has three devices to trap Christians: 1) lust (desire) of the flesh; 2) lust of the eyes; and 3) pride of life ...as it was in Eden (cf. Gen 3:6).

## Lust of the Flesh

“Lust of the flesh” includes anything that appeals to man’s fallen nature; it refers to the basic nature of unregenerate man that makes him blind to spiritual truth (1 Cor 2:14).

“Flesh” is the nature we receive in our natural birth as children of Adam; “spirit” is the nature that we receive in the second birth—when we become the “sons of God” (Jn 1:11,12; 3:5,6).

“...partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4).

These two natures are in active, continual opposition. (Desires are fundamentally good: hunger, thirst, sex, et al; but it is when the flesh nature controls them that they become sinful lusts.) Everything that God says about the flesh is negative:

*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*  
Romans 7:18

*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*  
John 6:63

*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*  
Philippians 3:3

*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*  
Romans 13:14

## Lust of the Eyes

Second device: “lust of the eyes.” Feast your eyes on this...

*Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.*  
Psalm 119:37

Achan, a soldier, brought defeat because of the lust of his eyes (cf. Joshua 7:21). The eyes are a gateway to the mind.

## The Pride of Life

Third device: “pride of life.” Madison Avenue makes this a major weapon.

- 17] And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The world is passing away. It is not permanent. Be loosely attached (cf. Heb 11:13; 13:14). Live for the unseen realities (cf. 2 Cor 4:8-18).

Every nation became decadent and was finally conquered by another nation. (There is no reason why ours should be an exception.)

*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*  
—Jim Elliot (missionary martyr)

Responding to the Father’s love (our devotional life)—and the Father’s will (our daily conduct)—are the tests of worldliness. No Christian becomes worldly all of a sudden.

First comes friendship with the world (James 3:4). The world and the Christian are enemies (1 Jn 3:13). Next, the Christian becomes “spotted by the world” (James 1:27). Friendship leads to love; as a result, the Christian becomes conformed to the world (Rom 2:2). Being conformed can also lead to being condemned with the world (1 Cor 11:32). In extreme cases, Christians have even lost their lives (1 Cor 11:29-30).

## The Example of Lot

These downward steps are illustrated in the life of Lot (Gen 13:5-13; 14:8-14; 19). First, Lot looked toward Sodom; then he pitched his tent toward Sodom in the well-watered plains of Jordan. Then he moved into Sodom. (It seems to suggest he became an alderman or leader: “He sat in the gate,” Gen 19:1.)

When Sodom was captured by an enemy, Lot was captured too. He was a believer, but he had to suffer with the unbelieving sinners of the wicked city (2 Pet 2:6-8). When God destroyed Sodom, everything Lot lived for went up in smoke! Lot was saved so as by fire and lost his eternal reward (1 Cor 3:12-15).

## The Will of God

He wants us to understand His will:

*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*  
Ephesians 5:17

A benefit of salvation is knowing God’s will (Acts 22:14). God wants us to be filled with knowledge of His will:

*For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...*  
Colossians 1:9

The key issue about a thing isn’t whether “it” is right or wrong, good or bad: but rather, is it the will of God for me? How does one discover the will of God? The process begins with *surrender*!

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

Romans 12:1,2

The Father shares His secrets with those who obey Him:

*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

John 7:17

## Summary

The Christian is *in* the world physically (Jn 17:11) but not *of* the world spiritually (Jn 17:14). Christ has sent us into the world to bear witness of Him (Jn 17:18). Like a scuba diver, we must live in an alien environment, and if we are not careful, that environment can drown us. The world gets into a Christian through his heart: “Love not the world.”

Are we going to build on sand or rock? (Mt 7:24-27). “It makes no difference what you believe, just as long as you are sincere.” (A common rationale for today.)

Is sincerity the magic ingredient that makes something true? (If you drink poison sincerely, will it make a medical difference?) Faith in a lie will *always* have serious consequences.

John has warned the Church family—the “bairn ones”—about the conflict between **light and darkness** (1 Jn 1:1-2:6), then he warned us about **love and hatred** (1 Jn 2:7-17). Now he warns us about the conflict between **truth and error** (Jn 2:18-29). It is not enough for a believer to walk in the light and to walk in love: he must also walk in *truth*.

- 18] Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

We are in an hour of crisis and must be on our guard against the errors of the enemy. Since the death and resurrection of Christ, God is doing a new thing in this world. All Old Testament history prepared the way for that profound event and its climax is coming! And the enemy knows it and will do everything in his power in his attempt to thwart it.

“...antichrist”: used only by John in his epistles four times (1 Jn 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn 7). It is interesting that he doesn’t use this term in the Revelation. Definitions include:

- 1) a spirit that is in the world that opposes or denies Christ;
- 2) the false teachers who embody this spirit;
- 3) a specific leader—a satanic superman—who will head up the final world rebellion against Christ.

The prefix *anti*: a) against; and/or b) instead of.

The spirit of antichrist has been in the world since Genesis 3, and is presently behind every false doctrine and every “religious” substitute for the realities Christians have in Christ. Their evil work is being hindered by the presence of the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church; but when the Church is removed in the *Harpazo* (“the rapture,” 1 Thess 4:13-18), then Satan will complete a temporary victory, which John details in Rev 13; 16:13; 19:20.

There are three outstanding characteristics of these false teachers:

- 1) He Departs from the Fellowship (vv. 18, 19);
  - 2) He Denies the Faith (vv. 20-25; & 4:1-6);
  - 3) He Tries to Deceive the Faithful (vv. 26-29).
- 19] They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

“...us”: The fellowship of believers, the Church; they have *koinonia*. We are sometimes presented as a body (1 Cor 12) and sometimes as a building (Eph 2:19-22). Not all who are in the fellowship are saved; but remaining in the fellowship is one evidence.

Jesus makes it clear that only those who produce fruit are truly “born again.” It is interesting that in the history of the false cults and anti-Christian religious systems, every leader started out in a local church. They were “with us” but not “of us.” The NT makes it clear that it is dangerous to depart from the fellowship (2 Tim 3-4; 2 Pet 2).

- 20] But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

The false teachers then—and today—used two special words to describe their experience: “Knowledge” (thus, Gnostics); and “Unction” (anointing), which gave them their unique knowledge, and “illumination.”

Our great advantage is that Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh! (1 Jn 4:2). [Not all pulpits so declare: 1 Jn 4:1-6.] If they deny this, they belong to antichrist.

- 21] I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

[Reason #5 (of 7): Because no lie is of the truth.]

- 22] Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.
- 23] Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (*but*) *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

You cannot separate the Father and the Son (cf. Jn 10:30).

- 24] Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

The unsaved world can never understand a true Christian. To confess that “Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh” involves much more than simply to identify Christ; the demons did this and it did not save them (Mk 1:24). True faith is a *committed reliance* on who He is and what he has done, not mere intellectual assent.

- 25] And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.
- 26] These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

[Reason #6: Protection against seducers.] John's purpose was to protect the saints against those who would lead them astray. Here's a specific book of the Bible written to protect *you* from error.

It is interesting that anti-Christian groups rarely try to lead lost sinners to their false faith; instead, they spend much of their effort trying to convert professing Christians to their doctrines. They are out to seduce...

Jesus called Satan the "father of lies" (Jn 8:44). The devil's purpose is to lead Christians astray by encouraging false doctrines (2 Cor 11:1-4,13-15). It is possible to "spin" or twist the Scripture to mean almost anything (2 Cor 4:1-2).

Satan has counterfeit ministers (2 Cor 11:13-15) preaching a counterfeit gospel (Gal 1:6-12) that produces counterfeit Christians (Jn 8:43-44) who depend on a counterfeit righteousness (Rom 10:1-10). Jesus sows the true seed; the enemy the tares (Mt 12:24-30).

John was writing in the midst of the emerging Gnostic heresies; and so these letters are extremely timely today, with widespread denials of the deity of Jesus Christ so prevalent in the antics of the "Jesus Seminar" and various blasphemous TV specials, etc.

We discussed several variants among the Gnostics last time. There were two additional extreme groups that also denied the Messiahship of Jesus (that were mentioned in Acts 17:18): The Stoics and the Epicureans.

## The Stoics

The Stoics were disciples of Zeno, and their name came from the Painted Portico at Athens where Zeno lectured. They were pantheists who held that the wise man should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law. They observed rigid rules and self-discipline. [Even the Greeks understood that *eros* needed to be carefully bridled! The rampant exploitation—and demeaning—of sex in our society is reaping a whirlwind!]

## The Epicureans

The Epicureans took their name from Epicurus who taught in Athens. They accepted the Greek gods on Mount Olympus. They considered pleasure rather than truth the primary pursuit of life. Originally they sought to satisfy intellectual—rather than sensual—gratification; but later they taught their followers to satisfy the body's desires so they

wouldn't bother them any more. Today: with denial of any foundational absolute truth, is it any wonder that "everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes"? (Deut 12:8 Judg 17:6; 21:25; Prov 12:15; 21:2).

Between the two extremes of the Stoics and the Epicureans there were many variations; but they all denied the Messiahship of Jesus (Cf. 1 Jn 2:22).

## The Gnostics

The Gnostics were distinctive in that they, boasting of a "superknowledge," accepted (sort of) the deity of Jesus, but denied His humanity.

[It was the opposite of agnosticism, which holds that the reality of God is unknown and probably unknowable. Charles Spurgeon has pointed out that "agnostic" is the Greek word for the Latin, "ignoramus." Which, of course, doesn't impress people at parties: "I'm an ignoramus" just doesn't have the same ring to it!]

It is significant to note that the subsequent headquarters of the Gnostics was Alexandria, the famed literary headquarters in Egypt. The "Alexandrian Manuscripts" (*Codex Vaticanus* and *Codex Sinaiticus*) are now understood to have been expurgated variations that remained discarded for many years, but were promoted by Westcott and Hort (competent linguists who embraced Gnostic heresies). Thus, these sources became a major influence on most modern translations.

In recent years many scholars now regard these sources as corrupt and have encouraged a return to the Byzantine texts as represented by *Textus Receptus*, et al., that were the primary sources for the King James Version and its variants. [See *How We Got Our Bible* Briefing Package for a more detailed review.]

Yet, how does one detect the counterfeits?

- 27] But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

"...the anointing": This anointing abides in the believer and equips him for his calling as a true witness to Christ (cf. 1 Pet 2:5).

- 28] And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.



“...abide”: *Abide* means to remain in fellowship, and fellowship, or *koinonia*, is the key idea in the first two chapters of this epistle.

## Abide

The word *abide* dominates this section: If we *abide* in Christ, we walk as He walked (1 Jn 2:6). If we love our brother, we *abide* in the light. (1 Jn 2:10). If the Word *abides* in us, we will be spiritually strong (1 Jn 2:14). If we do the will of God, we shall *abide* forever (1 Jn 2:17).

The anointing (of the Holy Spirit) *abides* in us and we should abide in the Spirit (1 Jn 2:27). We *abide* in the Word, in the Spirit, and in Christ (1 Jn 2:28).

- 29] If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Verses 28 & 29 are a bridge from the fellowship section into the sonship section of this epistle, which begins next time as we take up Chapter 3. The next three chapters will focus on sonship, or being “born of God.”

## The Epistles of John Session 6

### 1 John 3

## The Pretenders

Treasury agents study the real thing—not the counterfeits. 1 John 3 = counterfeit Christians: “Children of the Devil” (1 Jn 3:10).

The true child of God 1) practices righteousness; and, 2) loves other Christians despite their differences. 1 John 3:1-10 deals with the first; 1 John 3:11-24 deals with the second.

The first is not a new theme: 1 John 1 & 2 dealt with these. But in 1 John 3, the approach is different. In the earlier chapters the focus was on fellowship. In 1 John 3:1-5, the emphasis is on *sonship*—being “born of God.” (Basic to these chapters: 1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18)

## Three Reasons for a Holy Life

- |                                    |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| 1) God the Father Loves Us         | vv. 1-3  |
| 2) God the Son Died for Us         | vv. 4-8  |
| 3) God the Holy Spirit Lives in Us | vv. 9-10 |

## 1 John 3

- 1] Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

1 John 3:1 may be translated, “Behold, what peculiar out-of-this-world kind of love the Father has bestowed upon us.” While we were His enemies God loved us and sent His Son to die for us! Many translators add a phrase to 1 John 3:1: “that we should be called the sons of God, and we are.”

“...sons of God”: not simply a high-sounding phrase: it is a critical reality. [Cf. Sons of God vs. Sons of Adam; Gen 6 et al; Jn 1:11-12...]

We should not expect the world to understand this thrilling relationship because it does not even understand God. Only a person who knows God through Christ can fully appreciate what it means to be called a “child of God” [vs. the “brotherhood of man”].

- 2] Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Verse 1 tells what we are; verse 2 tells what we shall be. This was mentioned in 1 John 2:28 as an incentive for holy living and now it is elaborated.

“...that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”: One cannot understand the importance of 3:2 without some background in mathematics or physics: dimensionality, etc. This remarkable statement requires an understanding of *hyperspaces*: spaces of more than three spatial dimensions...

## “Stretching the Heavens”: More than a Metaphor?

*Who alone stretches out the heavens...*

Job 9:8

*Stretching out heaven like a tent curtain...*

Psalms 104:2

*Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in...*

Isaiah 40:22



He has stretched out the heavens...

Jeremiah 10:12

The Lord who stretches out the heavens...

Zechariah 12:1

## “Stretching the Heavens”

- 2 Sam 22:10
- Job 9:8
- Job 26:7
- Job 37:18
- Psalm 18:9
- Psalm 104:2
- Psalm 144:5
- Isaiah 40:22
- Isaiah 42:5
- Isaiah 44:24
- Isaiah 45:12
- Isaiah 48:13
- Isaiah 51:13
- Jeremiah 10:12
- Jeremiah 51:15
- Ezekiel 1:22
- Zechariah 12:1

## Space Is *Not* an Empty Vacuum

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| “torn”:                      | Isaiah 64:1                             |
| “worn out” like a garment:   | Psalm 102:25                            |
| “shaken”:                    | Hebrews 12:26; Haggai 2:6; Isaiah 13:13 |
| “burnt up”:                  | Peter 3:12                              |
| “split apart” like a scroll: | Revelation 6:14                         |
| “rolled up” like a mantle:   | Hebrews 1:12                            |
| ... or a scroll:             | Isaiah 34:4                             |

## “Rolled up?”

There is some dimension in which space must be “thin”; space can be “bent.” Then there is a direction which it can be bent *toward*. Thus, there must be *additional spatial* dimensions

*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is*

May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the **breadth**, and **length**, and **depth**, and **height**;  
Ephesians 3:18

- the **breadth**,  
– πλάτος *platos*: breadth; suggesting great extent
- and **length**,  
– μήκος *mekos*: length
- and **depth**,  
– βάθος *bathos*: depth, height; deep things of God
- and **height**,  
– ὕψος *hupsos*: height; of place (heaven); of rank

→ **4 Dimensions!**

*the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.*

Ephesians 3:17-19

## Hyperdimensions: Beyond Euclid (>3 Dimensions)

June 10, 1854: the most important mathematical lecture ever given... It took over 60 years for it to be applied... Georg Riemann’s lecture on Metric Tensors.

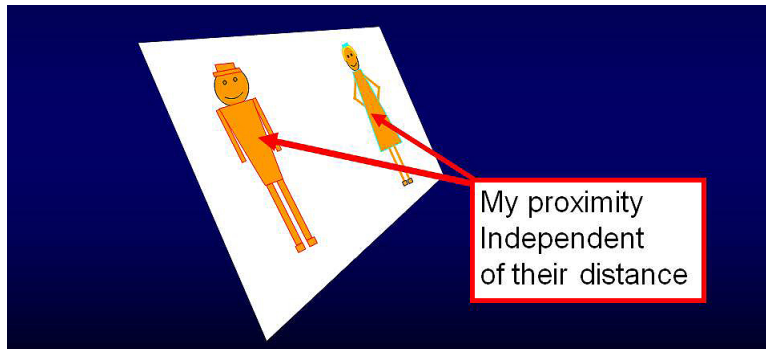
- 1915: Einstein, Four-Dimensional Space-time: Einstein went to his grave frustrated over his inability to reconcile issues which subsequently yielded by applying his previous insights.
- 1953: Kaluza-Klein: 4+n Dimensions (Light & Supergravity).
- 1963: Yang-Mills Fields (Electromagnetic & Both Nuclear Forces).
- 1984: Superstrings, 10-Dimensions (The current thinking among quantum physicists is that our universe consists of one-dimensional “superstrings” vibrating in 10 dimensions....)

## Dimensions of “Reality”

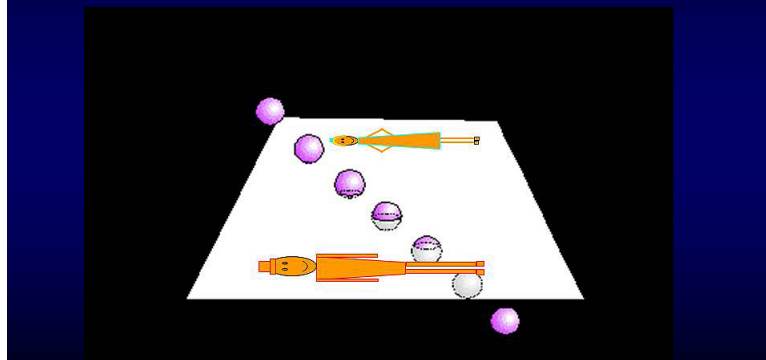
Nachmonides (13<sup>th</sup> century): 10 dimensions, only 4 are “knowable” (*Commentary on Genesis*, 1263). Particle Physicists (20<sup>th</sup> century): 10 dimensions, 4 are directly measurable: (3 spatial + time) and the

other 6 are “curled” into less than  $10^{-33}$  cm, and thus inferable only by indirect means. (We have spent billions of dollars building elaborate particle accelerators to learn what Nachmonides discovered by doing his homework on Genesis One!)

There are only two kinds of people who are able to deal with hyperspaces (spaces of more than 3 dimensions): mathematicians with special training and small children. But we can gain some useful insights by examining a two-dimensional universe...Meet Mr. & Mrs. Flat:



## Sphere Passing Thru Plane:

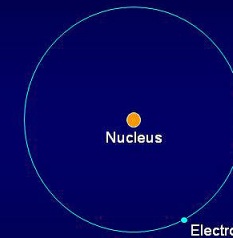


### How Solid is this Podium?

Is this podium “solid”? or is this just “empty space”? *Conjecture (2) is more descriptive than (1) by the same ratio: ~ one second / 30 million years!*

## Model of the Atom

(Not to scale!)



Atom:  $10^{-8}$  cm.

Nucleus:  $10^{-13}$  cm.

Ratio:  $10^{-8} / 10^{-13} = 10^5$

Area ratio:  $(10^5)^2 = 10^{10}$

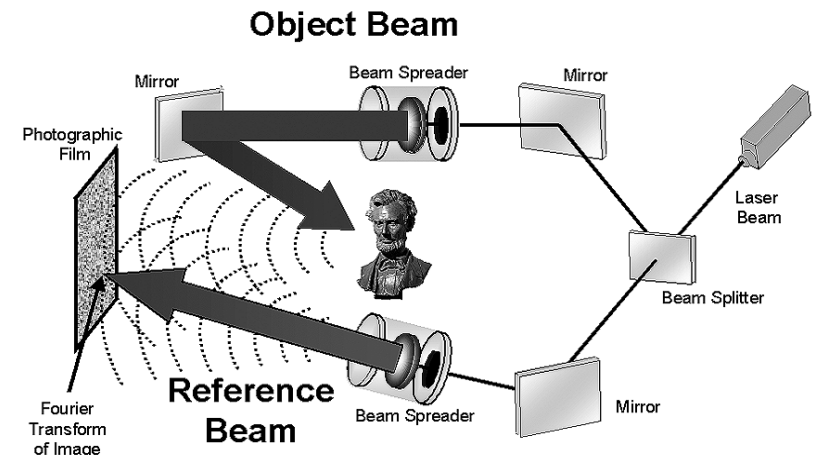
Volumetric ratio:  $(10^5)^3 = 10^{15}$

~ One second / 30 million years!

### Holography: A Provocative Analogy

A photograph is a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object; a hologram is a window into a three-dimensional space.

Holographic properties (Fourier Transforms) require proper illumination. It is useless in natural light. Information is spread over entire bandwidth; no loss from drop outs. It is resilient to specific interference and anticipates hostile jamming. The Bible is like a Hologram—it is transcendent of parallax.



- 2] Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.
- 3] And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

“...purifieth himself”: But the apostle does not stop there: he tells us what we should be. In view of His imminent return, we should keep ourselves clean. All this is to remind us of the Father’s love. He wants us to live with Him every day. Salvation, from start to finish, is an expression of the love of God. An unbeliever who sins is a creature sinning against his Creator. A Christian who sins is a child sinning against his Father.

### Three Reasons for a Holy Life

- 1) God the Father Loves Us                      vv. 1-3
  - 2) **God the Son Died for Us**                      **vv. 4-8**
  - 3) God the Holy Spirit Lives in Us              vv. 9-10
- 4] Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.
- 5] And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.
- “...manifested: John now turns from the future appearing of the Lord Jesus (1 Jn 3:2) to His past appearing (1 Jn 3:5); “manifest” means “appear.”
- 6] Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

John gives two reasons why Jesus came and died:

- 1) to take away our sins                              1 John 3:6-6
- 2) to destroy the works of the devil              1 John 3:7-8

For a child of God to sin indicates that he does not understand or appreciate what Jesus did for him on the Cross.

Every great personality of the Bible sinned at one time or another: Abraham lied about his wife (twice): Gen 12:10-20; & 20:2-13. Moses lost his temper and disobeyed God (Num 20:7-13). David had his affair with Bathsheba and even resorted to murder (2 Sam 11, 12). Peter denied the Lord three times (Mt 26:69-75).

But sin was not settled in the lives of these men. It was an incident in their lives, totally contrary to their normal lives, totally contrary to their

normal habits. And when they sinned, they admitted it, repented of it, and asked God to forgive them.

The unsaved person (even if he professes to be a Christian but is a counterfeit) lives a life of habitual sin; especially the sin of unbelief—it is the normal thing in his life.

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Ephesians 2:1-3

He has no divine resources to draw upon. His profession of faith is not real. This is the distinction that is in view in 1 John 3:1-10. A true believer does not live in habitual sin. He may commit sin—an occasional wrong act—but he will not *practice* sin (make a habit of it).

The difference is that a true Christian knows God. A counterfeit Christian may talk about God and get “involved” in “religious activities,” but he does not really know God. A true Christian lives a life of obedience; he does not practice sin. Christ appeared in order to take away our sins (vv. 4-6).

### Biblical Definitions of Sin

- *... for whatsoever is not of faith is sin...*                      Rom 14:23
- *The thought of foolishness is sin...*                              Prov 24:9
- *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin...*                      James 4:17
- *All unrighteousness is sin...*    1 Jn 5:17

But here (1 Jn 3:4), John defines sin as lawlessness. The emphasis is not on sins (plural); but on sin (singular). Sins are fruit; but sin is the root. God’s love does not mean He has no rules and regulations for His family.

*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*  
John 2:3

*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

1 John 3:22

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.*

1 John 5:2

God's children are not in bondage to the OT law, for Christ has made us free and has given us liberty (Gal 5:1-6). Sin is basically a matter of the will. For us to assert our will against God's will is rebellion and rebellion is the root of sin. The very essence of sin is lawlessness. The whole work of the Cross is denied when a professed Christian practices deliberate sin. This is one reason why Paul calls such people "enemies of the Cross of Christ" (Phil 3:18,19).

- 7] Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.
- 8] He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

"...destroy" does not mean "annihilate." Satan is certainly still at work today! *Destroy* here, means "to render inoperative, to rob of power." Jesus compares this world to a palace that contains many valuable goods. A strong man is guarding his palace (Lk 11:14-23). Every time a lost sinner is won to Christ, more of Satan's "spoils" are taken from him.

Christ appeared in order to destroy the works of the devil. If a man knows God, he will obey God; if he belongs to the devil, he will obey the devil. John accepts the reality of a personal devil: many different names in Scripture: Satan = Adversary; Devil = Accuser; Abaddon or Apollyon = Destroyer; Prince of this world; Dragon, et al.

Satan's chief activity: to oppose Christ and God's people. Satan is not eternal. Satan is a rebel. Christ is the obedient Son of God...even to the death of the Cross...

Christ is God but was willing to become a servant; Satan was a servant who wanted to become God.

Jesus was born of a woman so that we could be born of God;  
He humbled Himself so that we could be lifted up;  
He became a servant so that we could be made joint-heirs;  
He suffered rejection so that we could become His friends;  
He denied Himself so that we could freely receive all things;  
He gave Himself so that He could bless us in every way.

## Three Reasons for a Holy Life

- 1) God the Father Loves Us vv. 1-3
  - 2) God the Son Died for Us vv. 4-8
  - 3) **God the Holy Spirit Lives in Us vv. 9-10**
- 9] Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

"...his seed": *No one who is born of God practices sin . . . he cannot practice sin because he is born of God* (1 Jn 3:9). Why? Because he has a new nature within him, and that new nature cannot sin. John calls this new nature God's "seed."

A child of God is given a new nature, and that new nature does not and will not commit sin. The reason that the prodigal son could not stay in the pigpen is that he was not a pig. He was a son of the Father, and he longed for the Father's house. If you are a child of God, you will want to be in the Father's house, and you will *long* for it.

"Abide" is one of John's favorite words. It is this abiding—*communion, koinonia*—that keeps us from deliberately disobeying God's Word. There is more in the death of Christ on the Cross than simply our salvation from judgment, as wonderful as that is. Through His death, Christ broke the power of the sin principle in our lives—Romans 6-8 is this identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. Christ not only died for me, but *I died with Christ!* Now I can yield myself to Him and sin will not have dominion over me.

## Three Tenses of "Being Saved"

- 1) "Have been" saved (past tense) from the **penalty** of sin; Positionally, called justification (Eph 2:8, 9).
- 2) "Are being" saved: (present tense) from the **power** of sin; Operationally, by the Holy Spirit, moment-by-moment; called sanctification (Rom 6).
- 3) "Shall be" saved: (future tense) from the **presence** of sin; called "the redemption of our body" (Rom 8:23).

When a person receives Christ as his Savior, tremendous spiritual changes take place in him. He is given anew standing before God, being accepted as righteous in God's sight. This new standing is called "*justification*." It never expires and is never lost. The new Christian is also given a new position: and he is set apart for God's own purposes



to live for His glory. This new position is called sanctification and it has a way of changing from day to day. [Two natures: which do you “feed the most”?]

## Spiritual Hygiene

Physical man needs cleansing; so does the inner man (James 1:22-25); the Christian’s “bar of soap” (1 Jn 1:9). Unconfessed sins are the first step in what the Bible calls “backsliding” (Jer 3:22). Sin is like a virus; instead of fighting its invasion, we yield to it: we are carried away; enticed; bait & hooked; trapped: the end is death (James 1:13-15).

The inner man needs food and cleansing; he also needs *exercise* (1 Tim 4:7). That includes exercising—not defrauding—the Body of Christ with your spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:1-11).

- 10] In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

Yielding to sin is the distinguishing mark of the “child of the devil.” They profess or claim one thing, but practice another. Satan is a liar and the father of lies (Jn 8:44).

*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

1 John 2:4

False teachers in John’s day taught that a Christian did not have to worry about sin because only the body sinned and what the body did in no way affected the spirit. Some of them went so far as to teach that sin is natural to the body, because the body is sinful.

The NT exposes the foolishness of such excuses for sin. The “old nature” is not the body; the body itself is neutral. It can be used either by the old sinful nature or by the new divine nature.

How does a child of God go about overcoming the desire of the old sin nature? By beginning each day yielding his body to God as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1).

*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

Psalms 119:11

If he does sin, he must instantly confess to God and claim forgiveness. But it is not necessary for him to sin (1 Jn 1:9).

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

1 Corinthians 10:13

The true Christian also loves other Christians (detailed in 1 Jn 3:11-24). Yet, these words were not written so that you and I might check on other people. They were given so that we may examine ourselves.

- Do I have the divine nature within me or am I merely pretending to be a Christian?
- Do I cultivate this divine nature by daily Bible reading and prayer?
- Has any unconfessed sin defiled my inner man?
- Am I willing to confess and forsake it?
- Do I allow my old nature to control my thoughts and desires, or does the divine nature rule me?
- When temptation comes, do I “play” with it or do I flee from it?
- Do I immediately yield to the divine nature within me?
- The life that is real is honest with God about these vital issues.

We will explore four “levels” of relationship:

- |                          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|
| 1) murder;               | vv.11-12 |
| 2) hatred;               | vv.13-15 |
| 3) indifference;         | vv.16-17 |
| 4) Christian compassion. | vv.18-24 |

- 11] For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

The unbeliever sins against the law; the believer sins against love.

- 12] Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.

Murder is the lowest level; it is the level on which Satan himself exists (Jn 8:44). Cain is also an example (Gen 4:1-16). Cain is not presented as an atheist; he is presented as a worshiper. The children of the devil masquerade as true believers: they attend religious gatherings; they even bring offerings. These are not valid proofs that a person is born of God.

It seems clear that God had given definite instructions concerning how He was to be worshiped. Cain decided to do it his own way.



Satan is always interested in turning people away from the revealed will of God (Gen 3:1). The real test is his love for the brethren. Here, Cain failed. He murdered his brother, then lied about it (Gen 4:9). His envy had turned to anger. Centuries later, the Pharisees did the same thing to Jesus (Mk 15:9-10). Jesus, here too, called them children of the devil (Jn 8:44).

- 13] Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

The world hates Christ for the same reason Cain hated Abel: Christ reveals the world's sin and its true nature; then they must either repent or destroy the messenger (Jn 15:18-25). Satan is the "prince of this world" and controls it through murder and lies. Like Cain, the people of the world try to cover up their true nature with religious life.

In contrast to this, God is love (1 Jn 4:8) and truth (Jn 14:6; 1 Jn 5:6).

- 14] We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

To a Christian, hatred is the same as murder (1 Jn 3:15; Mt 5:21-26)...

- 15] Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

...and lust is the same as adultery (Mt 5:27-30). Note: we are not being told that murderers cannot be saved. Paul took part in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:57-60) and he admitted that his vote helped to put innocent people to death (Acts 26:9-11; 1 Tim 1:12-15). But God's grace saved him. The issue is whether one can *continue* to be a murderer. The answer is no. Hatred does the hater far more damage than it does anyone else (Mt 5:21-26) ...it actually puts one into a spiritual and emotional prison. The antidote is love.

- 16] Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Failure to do evil is not enough. Love involves doing them some good (Isa 1:16-17). Jesus didn't just talk about His love; He died to prove it (Rom 5:6-10). He was not a martyr; He willingly laid down His life (Jn 10:11-18; 15:13). Self-preservation is the first law of physical life; Self-sacrifice is the first law of spiritual life.

- 17] But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

John turns from "the brethren" in v.16 to the singular (and specific) "his brother" in v.17. Personal and active... Who is "his brother"? (Lk10:15-37). Ignoring a need can be sin; indifference to needs... One of the benefits of stewardship is the ability to meet the needs of others (Eph 4:2).

- 18] My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Talk's cheap:

*If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?*

James 2:15, 16

### Three Wonderful Blessings

- |                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Assurance       | vv.19-20  |
| 2) Answered Prayer | vv. 21-22 |
| 3) Abiding         | vv.23-24  |

- 19] And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

A Christian who practices love grows in his understanding of God's truth, and enjoys a heart full of confidence before God. Truth: when the word and deed become one. The Ultimate Truth: Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

- 20] For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

At Bethany, Jesus knew Mary's heart and defended her (Lk 10:38-42). After Peter's denial, Jesus knew of his repentance and sent a special message to him (Mk 16:7). (Peter's confidence was essential on this very issue; Acts 3:14.) Be careful that the devil not accuse you and rob you of your confidence (Rev 12:10).

### Three Wonderful Blessings

- |                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| 1) Assurance       | vv.19-20  |
| 2) Answered Prayer | vv. 21-22 |
| 3) Abiding         | vv.23-24  |

- 21] Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

- 22] And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Your love for the brethren proves you are living in the will of God where He can answer your prayer. A believer's relationship to the brethren cannot be divorced from his prayer life. If husbands and wives are not obeying God's Word, their prayers will be hindered (1 Pet 3:7; Jn 15:7; Ps 37:4).

- 23] And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Love is the fulfilling of God's Law (cf. Rom 13:8-10).

- 24] And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

"...the Spirit": The Holy Spirit is here mentioned for the first time (introduced in 1 Jn 2:20).

- Abiding: 1 Jn 3:24, 4:13;
- Attesting: 1 Jn 4:1-6;
- Authenticating: 1 Jn 5:6-8; Cf. Rom 8:14-16.

(The notes for this session were largely excerpted from *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, by Warren W. Wiersbe, see bibliography.)

## Next Session

False Teachers: Study 1 John 4.

## The Epistles of John Session 7

### 1 John 4

## Introduction

In the first section we encounter the warnings against false teachers. Is this really necessary today? It's never been more urgent! We are in the devil's territory. And the occult has never been more openly promoted... It is the purpose of the devil to confront us with error and thus to enslave us.

This first section (vv.1-6) is intended to fortify us against spiritual gullibility. John uses three personal pronouns:

- |                                |              |     |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-----|
| – <i>Ye</i> are of God         | The target   | v.4 |
| – <i>They</i> are of the world | The enemy    | v.5 |
| – <i>We</i> are of God         | The fearless | v.6 |

## 1 John 4

- 1] Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

"...false prophets": *How do you recognize them?* Many are in pulpits. The birds of Matthew 13 are in the overgrown mustard trees! (cf. Mt 13:4,19 vs. v.32). *They have crept in unawares...* (Jude 4).

## False Teachers

False doctrines had begun to make inroads; both 2 Peter and Jude deal with these. A greater apostasy was to come. Paul also dealt with similar libertine false teachers (1 Cor 6:19-20; 7:23).

A false teacher is not a person who teaches false doctrine out of ignorance. Apollos taught mistakenly the message and the baptism of John, but he was not a false teacher (Acts 18:24-28).

False teachers are professed believers who know the truth but who deliberately teach lies in the hope of promoting themselves and getting financial gain from their followers (1 Jn 2:3, 14); they are able to live in sin to please themselves (1 Jn 2:10, 13-14, 18-19); they use deceptive means (1 Jn 2:1, 3) and twist the Word of God to suit their fancies.

*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

2 Peter 2:1

False prophets arose in Israel (Cf. Jer 5:31; 23:9-18), in Peter's day, and so also among us. The church is never injured from the outside; only from the inside.

"...privily": False teacher never announce their arrival as such.

"...damnable heresies": There is no heresy that has not been *anticipated* by the Holy Spirit. Heresy is like leaven (Gal 5:9); it corrupts all with which it comes in contact.

"...denying the Lord who bought them": A direct rebuttal of limited atonement, the view that Christ died only for those whom He would later save "...and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world" (1 Jn 2:2).

## False Teachers

- Their teaching was flattery;
- Their ambitions were financial;
- Their lives were dissolute;
- Their conscience was dulled;
- Their aim was deception. Cf. Isa 28:7; Jer 23:14; Ezek 13:3; Zech 13:4. “Wolves in sheep’s clothing” is the way our Lord pictured them (Mt 7:15; cf. 2 Cor 4:1,2; 11:13).

*And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

2 Peter 2:2

“...pernicious ways”: ἀσελγείαις, *aselgeiais*: debased sexually; immoral practices. Debauchery (1 Pet 4:3); filthy (2 Pet 2:7); lustful (2 Pet 2:18). ἀσέλγεια *aselgeia* unbridled lust, excess, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence (Rom 13:13; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 4:9; Jude 4).

*And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

2 Peter 2:3

“...feigned words”: “Counterfeit words” or “manufactured, fabricated words.” πλαστός *plastos*, from which we get the English word “plastic.” They take familiar Bible words and manufacture new meanings for them. They use our vocabulary but empty these words of spiritual meaning. They will fall into the same judgment as former violators of truth. God’s judgment is never late.

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

Matthew 7:15-20

*And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*

Matthew 24:11

*Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall*

*shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.*

Matthew 24:23-25

Thus, *test every sermon*:

- 2] Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

“...Christ...in the flesh”: [The ISV uses the term *Messiah*!] Is the Virgin Birth important? *It is essential!* What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? (This question befuddled the skeptics; Mt 22:42; Ps 110:1.)

*While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.*

Matthew 22:41-46

<A Psalm of David.> The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Psalms 110:1

“YHWH said unto Adonai...” The grammar of the possessive hangs on a single *yot*! (Cf. Mt 5:18).

- 3] And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

This is the third reference to the spirit of “antichrist” (cf. 1 Jn 2:18, 22).

- 4] Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

[A key memory verse...The Christian’s “44”!] Let’s not forget that Satan has two strategies: 1) Deny his existence; or 2) Overemphasize his capabilities.

- 5] They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

“They are of the world”: The world is *his*. The media, and virtually all formal institutions...Is it any wonder that they tolerate any religion *except* Christianity? [Cain was religious...]

- 6] We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

The essential equipment—the Armor of God—is listed in Ephesians 6:10-18.

## God Is Love

For the third time we will be considering the subject of Love, this time from a deeper point of view. Love for the brethren has been shown as proof of fellowship with God (1 Jn 2:7-11). Then it was presented as proof of sonship (1 Jn 3:10-14). In the earlier passage, love for the brethren was a matter of light or darkness; in the second, it is a matter of life or death.

Now we get down to the very foundation of the matter, why love is such a critical part of a life that is real (1 Jn 4:7-16). Love is the valid test of our fellowship and sonship because *God is love*. If we are united to God through faith in Christ, we share His nature. Thus, *love is the test of the reality of our spiritual life*.

## Three Foundational Facts

- |                               |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 1) What God <i>is</i> :       | God is Love      |
| 2) What God <i>did</i> :      | He sent His Son  |
| 3) What God <i>is doing</i> : | God abides in us |

- 7] Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

Three times in this section we are encouraged to love one another (1 Jn 4:7, 11-12).

- 8] He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

“...knoweth not”: Because we have been born into His family, we have received His nature (cf. 1 Pet 1:14-16; 2 Pet 1:4).

“Know” = γινώσκω *ginosko* much deeper meaning than simply intellectual acquaintance or understanding. [This verb is used to describe the intimate union of husband and wife; cf. Gen 4:1.]

To *know* God means to be in a deep relationship with Him. This knowing is not simply a matter of understanding facts; it is a matter of perceiving the truth.

Many of us have “18-inch problems”: getting what is in our heads into our hearts. The fact that Christians love one another is evidence of their fellowship with God, their sonship from God, and that they know *God*. This is a daily experience of growth. We are to be growing in this direction. To argue otherwise is to prove that one does not really know God.

This is the third of three expressions in John’s writings that help us understand the nature of God:

- 1) God is spirit (Jn 4:24) as to His essence. Beyond the restrictions of the physical world; not limited by time and space...
- 2) God is light (1 Jn 1:5) as a symbol of holiness; darkness is a symbol of sin (Jn 3:18-21; 1 Jn 1:5-10).
- 3) God is love (1 Jn 4:8); even His judgments are measured out in love and mercy (Lam 3:22-23).

## Three Foundational Facts

- |                               |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 1) What God <i>is</i> :       | God is Love      |
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| 3) What God <i>is doing</i> : | God abides in us |

Not only in words: in deeds. In fact, He has geared all creation to meet man’s needs: The Anthropic Principle...*And in the ultimate deed*:

- 9] In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

“...manifested” = made public; out in the open. Under the Old Covenant, God was hidden behind the shadows of rituals and ceremony; cf. Rom 5:8—Why? (1 Jn 3:5, 8).

“...his only begotten son”: When? At the Cross. This is the only place in this Epistle where Jesus is called “His only begotten Son”: unique; the only one of its kind (Jn 1:14).

Two purposes are given for Christ’s death on the Cross: 1) that we might live through Him (v.9); 2) that He might be a propitiation for our sins (v.10).

- 10] Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

“...propitiation”: John has used this term before (1 Jn 2:2). Two different forms of the Greek word are translated “propitiation.” Here, ἱλασμός

*hilasmos* it is a predicate accusative in apposition with υἱὸν *huion*, that is the Son. Propitiation is something God does to make it possible for men to be forgiven.

## Propitiation

The great mystery...even Socrates recognized the paradox:

*It may be that the deity can forgive sins, but I do not see how.*

Socrates to Plato

Hal Lindsey's Acronym for "GRACE": "God's Riches At Christ's Expense."

God loves you, but He cannot save you by love. He has to do something about the fact of sin. It took the Cross. This paradox is what the Book of Romans deals with in Chapters 1-7; God's predicament, which is solved by God's *greatest gift*: His Son. [This is the role symbolized by the "Mercy Seat"—*propitiation*—in the Tabernacle and the Temple. Some scholars believe that it will be literally used in the Millennium for His throne.]

Jesus was "made flesh" (Jn 1:14) and He was also "made sin" for us (2 Cor 5:21). It is significant that we are to remember His death (not His birth!) in the Lord's Supper. He commands it: "This do in remembrance of me."

"In this way is seen the true love" (Rom 5:5).

11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

A second time we are admonished to love one another.

## Three Foundational Facts

- |                                     |                         |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) What God <i>is</i> :             | God is Love             |
| 2) What God <i>did</i> :            | He sent His Son         |
| 3) <b>What God <i>is doing</i>:</b> | <b>God abides in us</b> |

12] No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

"No man has seen...": 1 Tim 1:17. Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). We are *participants* in the great drama of God's love!

## God's Dwelling Places

- 1) In Eden: He walked with Man (Gen 3:8). [No Temple in Eden.] Sin required man's covering. [Enoch, Gen 5:22 Noah, Gen 6:9 and Abraham, Gen 17:1; 24:40 also "walked" with God.]
- 2) After the Exodus, God dwelt with man by means of the Tabernacle (Ex 25:8; 40:33-35). God dwelt in the camp, but not in the bodies of the individual Israelites. Unfortunately, the nation sinned and God's glory departed (1 Sam 4:21).
- 3) But God used Samuel and David to restore the nation; Solomon built a magnificent Temple; once again God came to dwell (1 Kgs 8:1-11). But once again, the glory of God departed (Ezek 8:4; 9:3; 10:4; 11:22-23).
- 4) Then came Jesus Christ (Mt 12:6!; Jn 1:14). Now God dwells in us! "Know ye not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit?" (1 Cor 6:19). [See *The Way of Agape* for the practical implications.]

"Love one another" is both a commandment (1 Jn 4:7) and a privilege (1 Jn 4:11). It is also a thrilling consequence and evidence of our abiding in Christ (1 Jn 4:12). *With this background, we examine the rest of this section:* 1 Jn 4:12-16

13] Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

"...dwell": The word μένω *meno dwell* is used six times in vv.12-16; "...to remain in spiritual oneness with Him." This is only possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

14] And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

[How does this reconcile with the Calvinist's "Limited Atonement"?]

15] Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

Contrast this indwelling with the isolation and separation when, in the OT, He dwelt in the Temple.

Warren Wiersbe notes that three different witnesses are suggested: 1) The witness *of* the believer that Jesus Christ is God's Son (v.15); 2) The witness *in* the believer by the Spirit (v.13); 3) The witness *through* the



believer that God is love and that He sent His Son to die for the world (v.14).

- 16] And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

“God is love” is not simply a conceptual statement: *it is the basis for the believer’s relationship with God and with his fellow man.*

## Summary

“Love one another” is both a commandment (1 Jn 4:7) and a privilege (1 Jn 4:11). It is also a thrilling consequence and evidence of our abiding in Christ (1 Jn 1, 2). The better we know God’s love, the easier it will be to live as a Christian.

Bible knowledge alone is insufficient; in fact, a dangerous substitute if we are not careful. Unless we love the lost, our verbal witness to them will be useless and often counter productive.

We are to return love for the world’s hatred and slander (Mt 5:11, 44). We have been focusing on Christians loving one another. But now we turn to a deeper, more important topic: the believer’s love for the Father.

The Father loves His children in the same way He loves Christ (Jn 17:23, 26). The Christian life is to be a daily experience of growing in the love of God.

There are four evidences suggested by which a believer can know that his love for the Father is being perfected. The first two are:

- Confidence vv. 17-19
- Honesty vv. 20-21

- 17] Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

“Boldness” here can mean “confidence” or “freedom of speech.” It does not mean brazenness or brashness. A believer has a reverential fear of God, not a tormenting fear; he is a son who respects his Father, not a prisoner who cringes before a judge.

- 18] There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

“There is no fear in love”: *Fear*: Greek, φόβος *phobos* “phobia.” John is writing about *krisisphobia*, “fear of judgment.”

*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

Hebrews 9:27

- 19] We love him, because he first loved us.

A believer in Christ does not have to fear the past, present or future. For the Christian, judgment is not future, it is past; we have been judged already on the Cross.

- 20] If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

**Honesty** (vv.20-21). Ananias and Sapphira were simply playing a role (Acts 5).

- 21] And this commandment have we have from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

There are four evidences suggested by which a believer can know that his love for the Father is being perfected: Confidence (vv. 17-19) and Honesty (vv.20-21). We have examined two of four evidences. *The final two will be in the final chapter in our next session.*

## Final Session

Review your notes on 1<sup>st</sup> John, and study Chapter 5.

## The Epistles of John Session 8 1 John 5

### Review

Everything in creation obeys the will of God—except Man! (Cf. Ps 148:8.) [The Book of Jonah demonstrates this: the wind, the waves, the fish—even a plant and a little worm...]

Love is the most powerful concept in the entire Scripture; it is presented as the crowning attribute of God. And this “First” epistle of John is the favorite of many because of its being, perhaps, the crowning statement of God’s love and the perfecting of His love in the believer.

As we closed Chapter 4, John announced four evidences that the believer's love is being perfected. We have examined two of them:

- 1) Confidence 1 John 4:17-19
- 2) Honesty 1 John 4:20-21

And now the two others:

- 3) Joyful Obedience 1 John 5:1-3
- 4) Victory 1 John 5:4-5

## 1 John 5

- 1] Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

A call to *joyful* obedience. [Cf. Paul's epistle to the Philippians...] Obedience—*joyful obedience*—is a family matter.

- 2] By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

*Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather.*

—D.L. Moody

- 3] For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

The Bible is *not* a textbook; it is a love letter.

*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.  
I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.  
I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

Psalm 119:14-16

*Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*

Psalm 119:54

*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

Psalm 119:97

*How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

Psalm 119:103

Key point: As our love for the Father matures, we have confidence and are no longer afraid of His will!

- 4] For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

“Overcome” is one John's favorite words: recall the seven promises to the overcomer in each of the “Seven Letters to the Seven Churches” in Revelation (chapters 2 & 3). We grow in faith as we grow in love. [The ultimate growth is what is dealt with in our book, *Faith in the Night Seasons*; and our recent book, *Kingdom, Power & Glory – An Overcomer's Handbook*.]

- 5] Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

John 16:33

Victorious faith is the result of maturing love. This is the panorama of the faithful in Hebrews 11: they simply took God at His Word and *acted* on it. Our previous study highlighted that backsliding, too, occurs in stages:

- |                              |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| 1) Friendship with the world | James 4:4      |
| 2) Spotted by the world      | James 1:27     |
| 3) Loving the world          | 1 John 2:15-17 |
| 4) Conformed to the world    | Romans 12:2    |

This love also must be cultivated; it is not a “once-and-for-all” thing. Christian love is not a passing emotion: it is a permanent devotion (cf. 1 Jn 4:19).

## How Do We Know For Sure?

*Nothing is certain but death and taxes.*

—Ben Franklin, 1789

“We know” occurs 39 times in John's letter; *eight times in this chapter*. [A new beginning?] John will deal with five Christian certainties:

- |                                    |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| 1) Jesus is God                    | vv.6-10  |
| 2) Believers have eternal life     | vv.11-13 |
| 3) God answers prayer              | vv.14-15 |
| 4) Christians do not practice sin  | vv.16-19 |
| 5) Christian life is the real life | vv.20-21 |

How *do* we know? Some called Him a liar, a deceiver (Mt 27:6); some called Him a lunatic; the Gnostics had a collection of strange ideas. John refutes these false teachings; he presents three infallible witnesses: **the water; the blood; the Spirit**.

## Jesus is God (vv.6-10)

- 6] This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

**“...by water”:** This refers to His baptism at the Jordan. The Father Himself spoke audibly to Jesus from Heaven (Mt 3:13-17).

**“...and blood”:** The Father gave further witness again as the time drew near for Jesus to die (cf. Jn 12:28). There was also the supernatural darkness, the earthquake, the rending of the Temple veil, etc. (Mt 27:45, 50-53). No wonder the centurion cried out, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

**“...it is the Spirit that beareth witness”:** The final active witness—active today—is the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:15-16). That is His specific purpose (Jn 15:26; 16:14). He speaks to us and teaches us. That is not true of the unsaved person (cf. 1 Cor 2:14).

When Jesus Christ died, we died with Him. Paul said:

*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Galatians 2:20

*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Romans 6:4

Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

- 7] For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

[There are some that dispute the presence of this verse in the original; our views are not significantly impacted by yielding the point in this review...]

- 8] And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

All was to be established by two or three witnesses (Deut 19:15).

- 9] If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.  
10] He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

(A full discussion of just “how sure can we be” is contained in our Briefing Pack, *Beyond Coincidence*.) If God is a liar, then nothing is certain...

## Believers Have Eternal life (vv.11-13)

- 11] And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.  
12] He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

A gift: it is not something that can be earned (Jn 10:27-29; Eph 2:8-9). It is a person: Jesus Christ. We receive this gift, not only *from* Jesus Christ, but *in* Jesus Christ. ...*the* life: “which is life indeed” (1 Tim 6:19 NAS).

- 13] These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

[Reason #7:] That ye may *know* that ye have eternal life. Our faith is not based on creedal statements: it is based on a person. “We know...” is used over 30 times!

Are you sure of your salvation? [*Don't finish this session until you have that assurance*]! People lack assurance because they: a) have no basis for assurance; or b) they do not know the Word of God. [See our Briefing Pack on *Eternal Security*.]

## God Answers Prayer (vv.14-15)

- 14] And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

*Anything*—even the needs and problems of daily life.

*But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 4:19

## Hindrances

Unconfessed sin is a serious obstacle to answered prayer. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me...*(Ps 66:18); Differences between husband and wife (1 Pet 3:1-7). *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you* (Jn 15:7).

Prayer is laying hold of God's willingness. Prayer is God's way of enlisting you in what He wants to do.

- 15] And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

"...know" is in the present tense (cf. Heb 11:1). Prayer is not spiritual self-hypnosis. Prayer is the thermometer of your spiritual life.

We pray because God has commanded us to pray and because prayer is the God-appointed means for a believer to receive what God wants to give him. Jesus depended upon prayer, sometimes all night (Lk 6:12).

## Christians Do Not Practice Sin (vv.16-19)

- 16] If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

There are occasions where one should *not* pray (if checked by the Holy Spirit):

*Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.*

Jeremiah 7:16

All sin is hateful to God and should be hateful to the believer; but some is punished with death:

- |                                  |                         |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Nadab and Abihu                | Leviticus 10:1-7        |
| • Achan                          | Joshua 6-7              |
| • Uzzah                          | 2 Samuel 6              |
| • Ananias and Sapphira           | Acts 5:1-11             |
| • Miscegenation at Lord's Supper | cf. 1 Corinthians 11:30 |

- 17] All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Believers who are alive today have all sinned, but we haven't sinned a sin unto death. We did something that was wrong, it was unrighteousness, but God didn't take us home. If He were taking home every believer who sinned, I would have been taken home a long time ago.

- 18] We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

Through continual prayer (cf. Lk 22:31-32). Satan cannot touch any believer without God's permission. One of the characteristics of the mature Christian is the ability to overcome the evil one (cf. 1 Jn 2:13-14). God will not allow us to be tempted above our strength:

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

1 Corinthians 10:13

- 19] And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

There are three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

## The Christian Life is the Real Life (vv.20-21)

Reality has been the theme of this letter. John was probably writing to believers in the city of Ephesus, a city given over to idols of all kinds. The Temple of Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world, was located in Ephesus; merchandising idols was a chief industry there (Acts 19:21-41). Christians were under enormous pressure to conform...

The Psalms contain caustic indictments of idolatry.

*They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.*

Psalms 115:8; 135:18

Is an idol false and empty? Those who live for them become false and Those who live for the world become harsh and unforgiving. *Those who live for Christ become like Him!*

- 20] And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

We have "the real thing." Jesus is the true God. We know Him; and we are in Him. Jesus is the true Light (Jn 1:9)...the true Bread (Jn 6:32)...the true Door (Jn 10:7-9)...the true Vine (Jn 15:1)...and Truth itself (Jn 14:6).

Most unsaved people live in an atmosphere of pretense and sham. We live in an atmosphere of reality. We have been given spiritual discernment to know the true from the false; but the unsaved do not have this understanding. Christians not only choose between the good and the bad: we choose between the true and false.

21] Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

## John's Writings

- John's Gospel: Our **past** Salvation
- John's Letters: Our **present** Sanctification
- John's Revelation: Our **future** His Glorious Appearing

1 John has been called the *sanctum sanctorum* of the New Testament. It takes the child of God into the fellowship of the Father's home. *Paul's epistles, and all the other epistles, are Church epistles; but this is a family epistle. It may prove more important to the individual believer than all the Church epistles!*

Life is real. It is a battleground, not a playground. If a person is wrong about Jesus Christ, he is wrong about God; if he is wrong about God, he is wrong about everything else.

## Seven Contrasts: Truth versus Error

- |                |                    |                |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| • The Light    | vs. The Darkness   | 1 Jn 1:5-2:11  |
| • The Father   | vs. The World      | 1 Jn 2:12-2:17 |
| • Christ       | vs. the Antichrist | 1 Jn 2:18-2:28 |
| • Good Works   | vs. Evil Works     | 1 Jn 2:29-3:24 |
| • Holy Spirit  | vs. Error          | 1 Jn 4:1-4:6   |
| • Love         | vs. Pious Pretence | 1 Jn 4:7-4:21  |
| • The God-Born | vs. others         | 1 Jn 5:1-5:21  |

## The Seven Tests

- |                  |                |
|------------------|----------------|
| • Of Profession  | 1 Jn 1:5-2:11  |
| • Of Desire      | 1 Jn 2:12-2:17 |
| • Of Doctrine    | 1 Jn 2:18-2:28 |
| • Of Conduct     | 1 Jn 2:29-3:24 |
| • Of Discernment | 1 Jn 4:1-4:6   |
| • Of Motive      | 1 Jn 4:7-4:21  |
| • Of New Birth   | 1 Jn 5:1-5:21  |

## Heptadic Structure

- Seven Traits of the Born Again (1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1 (2X), 4, 18).
- Seven Reasons why this epistle written (1 Jn 1:3, 4, 2:1, 13-17, 21-24, 26, 5:13).
- Seven Tests of Christian genuineness (1 Jn 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9, 4:20).
- Seven Tests of Honesty and Reality (1 Jn 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9; 4:20).
- [Six Liars: 1:6; 1:10; 2:4; 2:22; 4:20; 5:10]

## Six Liars

- 1) If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth (1 Jn 1:6).
- 2) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His truth is not in us (1 Jn 1:10).
- 3) He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 Jn 2:4).
- 4) Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son (1 Jn 2:22).
- 5) If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 Jn 4:20).
- 6) He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made God a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son (1 Jn 5:10).

## Review of Christian "Birthmarks"

*...Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

1 John 2:29

*Whosoever is born of God doth not [practice] sin...*

1 John 3:9

*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren...*

1 John 3:14

*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

1 John 4:7

*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world...*

1 John 5:4



## Your Action Plan?

What is God calling *YOU* to do? Is it time to “raise the bar” on your personal walk with Him?

- Commit to a systematic program to really learn your Bible;
- Join (or start) a Small Study Group;
- Respond to His calling...*NOW!*

## The Koinonia Institute

- Worldwide lifetime fellowship;
- Non-denominational; very fundamental;
- *A supplement, not a replacement;*
- “On your own clock” & schedule;
- A volunteer “think tank” for Christians;
- Committed to support *your* personal calling—*whatever it is...*

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# About The Cover Design

*(on the tape cassette volumes)*

## The “Front” cover:

The Greek border: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).” The center design element symbolizes the Word of God Incarnate, illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

## The “Back” cover: (the “front” to the Jewish reader)

The Hebrew border: “Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (from the Sh’ma, Deut 6:4-5).”

The center design represents the Burning Bush, made up of Hebrew letters which proclaim “the Eternal One cannot lie.”

## The Spine:

The spine includes a Menorah from the Old Testament, a Maranatha Dove suggesting the New Testament, and the Koinonia House logo at the base.



**Koinonia House**

P.O. Box D

Coeur d'Alene Idaho

83816-0347

(208) 773-6310

[www.khouse.org](http://www.khouse.org)

**ISBN: 978-1-57821-144-9**