

Dickson
Teacher's Bible

1 JOHN



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WRITER

John the apostle, and son of Zebedee, does not identify himself as the writer of this book. However, he has been given credit for being the inspired writer because of the similarity of grammar, writing style, and content of the book with the gospel of John (See “Writer” in intro. to Jn). The 2nd century church leader, Irenaeus, quoted Polycarp, who was one of John’s personal disciples. In his quotation of Polycarp, Irenaeus stated that Polycarp affirmed that John wrote this letter. Because of this affirmation, and the similarity of these letters with the gospel of John, there is little question among Bible students today concerning John’s authorship of this letter.

DATE

There are two views concerning the date of writing. According to the writings of the church leaders of the 2nd century, John lived to be an old man in the regions of Ephesus. Writers as Irenaeus affirmed that John wrote the letter from Ephesus the latter part of the 1st century, possibly around A.D. 90. Many students have accepted this possible date because John supposedly does not mention any judaizing problem in the church, which problem prevailed at the beginning of the church and is quite evident in the epistles of Paul. The lack of emphasis by John on Jewish theological legalism in the church is used as evidence to affirm that the destruction of national Israel in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 had already taken place by the time John wrote (See comments Mt 24).

Though Paul corrected the theology of legalism in the books of Romans and Galatians, there arose another problem of Jewish belief as the church neared the end of national Israel. This was the problem of rejecting Jesus as the Messiah (Christ). The nationalism of the Jews was building, and thus many went out claiming to be a messiah who would lead rebellious Jews against the Romans. These would deny that Jesus was the Messiah simply because Jesus did not preach a doctrine of rebellion against Rome.

For the preceding reason, some Bible students affirm that the letter was written immediately before A.D. 70. Since the destruction of Jerusalem was a prominent historical event in reference to the prophecy made by Jesus and other New Testament teachers and writers, we would assume that there would be mention of this historical event throughout the New Testament. The statements of 2:18,19 would indicate that John was writing to those who were teaching against the messiahship of Jesus. John referred to the prophecies concerning the coming of antichrists. His statements remind us of the prophecies of Jesus in Matthew 24 wherein Jesus spoke

concerning the coming of those who would claim to be christs (messiahs), as well as, those who would be false prophets among the disciples (Mt 24:4,5,23-25). If we interpret 2:18,19 to refer to the prophecies that Jesus and the other New Testament writers made concerning the end of national Israel, then John was in the last hour of national Israel. Since he was discussing something that was imminent, then he could not have been discussing supposed antichrists at the end of time.

The letter could possibly have been written during the latter part of the 60s, and thus, would have been written around the time the books of James, 2 Peter and Jude were written. James, Peter and Jude all spoke of the end of national Israel (See comments Js 5:7,8; Jd 14,15). It seems probable that John also wrote in reference to the end of national Israel, since the end of Israel was the consummation of almost 2,000 years of God's work from Abraham to the fulfillment of the promises through Jesus as the Messiah and Savior. The termination of national Israel was a traumatic event in the lives of those Jews who refused to believe that God would bring an end to His covenant relationship with the chosen people. To the Jews, the end of national Israel was the end of the world as they knew it. To nationalistic Jews, it was also incomprehensible that God would terminate that which He originated and continued for almost two thousand years.

The letter does deal with the beginnings of the theologies of Gnosticism that would later devastate the church in the 2nd century, though we would suggest that the immediate historical context was the end of national Israel. Though the Gnostic heresy developed into a great apostasy in the 2nd century, the foundational philosophies and theologies of the heresy developed out of the cradle of its birth in Asia Minor in the middle and latter part of the 1st century. Since the apostasy was so great in reference to the totality of the church in the Roman world, one could assume that the roots of the apostasy started many years before. Therefore, though Gnosticism was not a formalized theology of the 1st century, the philosophical and theological concepts of the movement were in the minds of 1st century Asian Jews, many of whom came into the church. There was a mixing of the roots of Gnosticism in Asia Minor with the truth of the gospel, and thus, the beliefs that would later become a formalized movement, began to greatly influence the church of John's readers. This was especially true of the church in the Asia Minor region.

It was during the last days of national Israel, therefore, that John, as well as Paul, wrote to combat these early beginnings of the apostasy that would grow to full force in the 2nd century. Paul wrote prophetically. John writes from the viewpoint that antichrists and false prophets had already arrived. Paul warned Timothy in Ephesus that the time would come when men would not hold to sound teaching (1 Tm 4:1ff; 2 Tm 4:3,4). John's readers were in the times about which Paul prophesied. Antichrists had arrived and John wrote to reassure his readers that the antichrists were not speaking the truth.

The anointing (the Holy Spirit) was teaching John's recipients all things through the teaching of the inspired prophets of the church who were active at the time John wrote (2:27). Since it was possible that the entire canon of New Testament scriptures was written before A.D. 70, the miraculous gifts, including the gift of inspired teaching, ceased before the end of national Israel. We would thus conclude that the letters of 1, 2 & 3 John were written before A.D. 70. The inspired teachers were working among those to whom John wrote, and thus we would conclude that the letter was written before A.D. 70.

THEME

There are two verses that express the theme of the letter. They are 1:3 and 5:13. *"That which we have seen and heard we declare to you so that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1:3). "These things I have written to you who believe on the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (5:13).* John's theme is to verify the incarnate Son of God in order that his readers be reassured of such, and thus, continue in fellowship with God in their belief that Jesus was the Christ.

PURPOSE

The purpose for which John wrote is based on serious doctrinal beliefs that had entered the thinking of some in the church. These doctrinal beliefs had affected the behavior of his readers. Therefore, in order to correct their erroneous behavior, he wrote to correct the doctrinal beliefs that laid the foundation for erroneous behavior.

John identified false prophets who were going among the churches (2:22-24). They claimed to be inspired teachers (4:1,2), and thus, they were taking advantage of the hospitality of the disciples (See 2 Jn 9-11; 3 Jn 6-8). He refers to these teachers as antichrists (2:18ff; 4:3; see 2 Jn 7). These false teachers denied the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. They denied the incarnation, and thus, they threatened the fellowship of the church that was based on the incarnation and messiahship of Jesus (1:3,4; 2:22-24). They threatened Christian behavior because they were attacking the sonship of Jesus, and thus, dethroning Jesus from His lordship over those who had committed their lives to Him. These teachers had deceived many in the church to accept their heretical beliefs (2:26; 3:7). Their teachings consisted of denying that Jesus had come in the flesh as the Christ (Messiah) (4:2; 2 Jn 7). They denied the responsibility that disciples have in caring for one another (3:11ff). Their spiritual arrogance led them to believe that they were not obligated to keep the commandments of God (2:3). Since these false teachers affirmed that they were beyond law, they believed that they were not under sin (1:7-10). Subsequently, they were affirming that obedience to the commandments of God was not necessary.

John's answer to the above problems comes in an outline of victories that the Christian has in Christ. The Christian has (1) victory over sin (ch 1), (2) victory over the evil one, Satan (ch 2), (3) victory through the righteousness of godly living (ch 3), (4) victory through love (ch 4), and (5) victory through faith (ch 5). The Christian's victory is based on the fact that God is the light of the world (1:5). He is the God of righteousness (2:29). He is a God of love, for He is love (4:8-16). John thus reassures his readers that their victories that come through faith must not be questioned by those who denied that Christ had come in the flesh.

In order to gain the victory, John places conditions on our beliefs and behavior as Christians. Christians must obediently walk in the light (1:7). They must confess that they are sinners, and thus, be driven to the grace of God for salvation (1:8-10). The advocacy of Jesus as a result of God's grace must move them to obey God's will (2:1-4). In their obedience, therefore, they must imitate Jesus as the Son of God (2:6). They must love others as God loved them (2:9,10; 4:19). And in loving Christ and others, they must hate the world (2:15-17), and thus, live righteously (2:29). Only by expressing their love of God through obedience in relation to God's commandments, and in fulfilling one's responsibilities toward one's brother, can there be victory over the world.

This letter of the New Testament is a letter of assurance. Those to whom John wrote were being discomfited by the theologies of pre-Gnostic teachers who had arrogantly forsaken the foundation of Christian belief. They denied that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) and that the Christ had come in the flesh. John counters the arguments of the false teachers among the disciples who made such claims. At the same time, he reassured his readers that they could know that they had a saving relationship with God. They could know (1) that they know God (2:3), (2) that they were abiding in God (2:5; 4:13), (3) that they had been born of God (2:29), (4) that they were God's children (3:1ff), (5) that they were of the truth (3:19), and (6) that they had eternal life (5:11-13). Knowing these things brings assurance that one is of God and knows God.

John affirms that we can know the preceding things because of the following in reference to our obedience to the will of God: (1) We keep God's commandments (2:3). (2) We keep God's word (2:5). (3) We walk in the light (2:6). (4) We do that which is right (2:29; 3:10). (5) We love the brotherhood (3:10). (6) The Holy Spirit has given witness to our sonship (3:24; 4:12). (7) We are listening to God's teachers of His word (4:6). (8) We are maintaining our faith (4:15). (9) We are manifesting our love of God through obedience (5:2). Our assurance, therefore, is based on our positive response to the love of God (4:19). If one does not respond to God's love in order to love his brother, then he knows that he loves only in word and not in deed (4:7-11). John wrote to reassure those of his audience who were walking in the light. Since they were living the repentant life, they must be assured that

God is cleansing them of all sin (1:7-9). Their confidence, therefore, was not in their performance of law to walk in the light in order to be sinless, but in the grace of God, who continually cleanses sin by the blood of the incarnate Son of God.

STYLE

The nature of the theme and purpose for which John wrote this epistle necessitates our understanding of a few Greek verb tenses. This is specifically true in reference to John's use of the Greek present tense. For instance, there were those in John's audience who claimed that they had no sin. John says that they were liars (1:7-9). But he also says that we do not sin (3:5). There is no contradiction here if we understand John's use of the Greek present tense. This tense expresses progressive action in present time. The Christian has no sin in the sense that he is not living a life of sin, and thus, the blood of Jesus continually cleanses him of sin. The Christian sins by committing acts of sin in moments of weakness. However, he does not behave in a manner that is progressively contrary to the commandments of God. Therefore, as we study through this epistle, it is important to note points where the particular verb tenses must be understood in order to form a correct interpretation of the text.

CHAPTER 1

Moral Foundation for Fellowship

(1:1-10)

Outline: (1) The incarnate Word (1:1-4), (2) Walking in the light (1:5-10)

THE INCARNATE WORD

1:1 That which: John begins the letter with the Greek neuter pronoun in reference to the Son of God. He explains the evidence of Jesus as the Son of God who walked among men. John's affirmation is that Jesus is God (Ep 4:20ff; Cl 2:6; see comments Jn 1:1,2). **From the beginning:** John uses this phrase to refer to different thoughts throughout the document. He uses the phrase to refer (1) to the conversion of his readers (2:7), (2) to the time when Satan began sinning (3:8), (3) to God who was present at the time of all beginnings, and (4) to the ex-

istence of the Word at the time of the beginning of the created world. In this context John uses the phrase in reference to the existence of the Word at the time of the beginning of the world (See comments Jn 1:1,2). Emphasis in these statements is in the fact that Jesus was in eternity with the Father when the world was created. In fact, He was the creator of the world (2:13,14; Jn 17:5; Cl 1:16). He was the beginning of the created world in the sense that through Him all things were created. **We:** John refers here to himself and all the Christ-sent apostles who personally encountered Jesus. Since he personally contacted and was with the Word, then he affirms that he is a valid witness to the incarnation of the Word. His testimony is based on what he and the apostles heard, saw, beheld and

handled (Jn 1:14). **Have heard:** The Greek perfect tense here emphasizes the apostles' hearing the incarnate Word in a manner that the hearing had an impact on their lives that continued unto the time of John's writing. **Have seen:** John again uses the perfect tense to stress the impact of their empirical encounter with Jesus. It was an impact that changed their lives. **Looked upon:** The Greek word here emphasizes a concentrated gaze by which they beheld the incarnate existence of the Word (Jn 1:14; 2 Pt 1:16). **Our hands have handled:** In the incarnate state, the Word was tangible and of the flesh of this world. He was flesh and blood that could be handled. He was not, therefore, a spirit or phantom that some Gnostics suggested (See Lk 24:39; Jn 20:27ff). **The Word of life:** John now brings us to the word *logos* (Word) that he has previously used in reference to the ministry of Jesus (Jn 1:1,2,14). The definition of this word made it possible to be used here by the Holy Spirit to define in some way, not so much the nature, but the function of the eternal Son of God. Plato (427-347 B.C.) used the word to refer to a mediator between God and man. Philo used the word to refer to the instrument by which God made the world, and thus, the very nature of the *logos* was an intermediary between God and man. Philo affirmed that the *logos* was a mediator between God and man who was the ambassador from heaven to man. He is thus the "rational order manifested in the visible world." The Stoic philosophers were influenced by these early Greek philosophical theologians. They

affirmed that the *logos* was a dynamic principle of reason that was operating in the world, and thus, forming a medium of communication between deity and the created world. The Jews adopted the theology that the *logos* was an entity of energy. He was the master builder of the universe. On the background of these diverse philosophies and theologies, the Holy Spirit selected the word *logos* to explain the work of Jesus. He assumes, however, that we will be cautious about bringing into the truth of who Jesus was and His present work, some of the erroneous definitions by which the word was used in philosophical and theological discussions of the 1st century. Simply because a word was taken from the Greek dictionary does not mean that we must attach to it the diversities of definitions that may be attached to the word. The Bible must be our final authority in defining the concepts of truth. Therefore, we will allow John to define the *Logos*, while at the same time, we will divorce our thinking from any corrupted philosophies and theologies of Plato, Philo or any other teacher who might contradict the revelation of God (See comments Jn 1:1,2,14). In John's use of the word *logos* to refer to Jesus he wants us to see the final, and thus, the totality of God's revelation to man. All was summed up in Jesus. This would include both the message He brought and the life He manifested. What was manifested was all that Jesus did and taught (See comments At 1:1,2).

1:2 The life was manifested: This verse is a parenthesis between verses 1

and 3. This was the incarnation of the *Logos*. He was made visible when He became flesh and blood (3:5,8; Jn 1:14; Ph 2:6-8; 1 Tm 3:16; 1 Pt 1:20). **We have seen and bear witness:** God manifested the life (Jn 1:4; 8:12). John affirms that he and the other apostles personally saw the life that was manifested through the *Logos*. They are thus competent witnesses to the *Logos*, and thus, witnesses to the life that He brought to all men (Lk 24:48; Jn 8:12; 21:24). The *Logos* was manifested in order to bring life. The apostles experienced the Light, but also the life that He brought into the world (See 3:14,15; Jn 5:24). **Eternal life:** This was the life that was eternal. Jesus is the life (Jn 11:25; 14:6), the light of life (Jn 8:12), and the bread of life (Jn 6:35,48). The light of Jesus, and the eternal life He brings, are synonymous. He is God's revelation of eternity that is available to all men through Him (Jn 14:6; see Rm 16:25-27; 1 Tm 3:16). **With the Father:** The Greek phrase *pros ton Patera* here refers to the close relationship the *Logos* had with the Father in eternity (Jn 1:1; 6:41,62; 17:21). Jesus was in heaven as one with God. It was not that there were three gods in eternal dwelling before the incarnation. It was that the one God existed, and then, was manifested through the only begotten Son of God. God has manifested Himself through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Son was the incarnate manifestation of the one God. Though the one God could have manifested Himself through many personalities, He has chosen to manifest Himself only through the Fa-

ther, Son and Holy Spirit in the work of redemption.

1:3 Fellowship with us: "Fellowship" here is from *koinonia*. Reference is to joint partnership and sharing in the common bond of having obeyed the gospel. The truth that John writes is the foundation upon which this fellowship is acquired and maintained. These things he writes, therefore, are fundamental truths that must be believed. Unless one believes them, he can have no fellowship with the apostles who have fellowship with God (See Jn 17:1; 1 Co 1:9; see comments 2 Jn 9). Since we are called into the divine triangle of fellowship (1 Co 1:9) through the gospel (2 Th 2:14), we must be cautious to continue in belief and behavior of these things that are fundamental to our salvation.

1:4 Joy may be full: Our joy results from being assured of those things that we have believed concerning the Word of Life (Compare 2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 3,4; see Jn 16:24). There is no assurance in being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (See Ep 4:13,14). Joy comes from knowing who one is in reference to God and what he has believed and obeyed.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

1:5 God is light: God is not "a" light. He is light (See Ps 27:1). He is thus the source of all light (Js 1:17). Light would not exist without the existence of God. God thus dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tm 6:16). Since He is light, then there is nothing of God that is impure, carnal or material. He is holy, pure, good, loving, desirable and righteous. There are

actually no earthly words that can be used to fully explain God who is in total contrast to all that is dark and evil. Since the spirit of man was created after the image of God, then it is natural for man to seek after God. Therefore, it was from God, who is light, that Jesus came to bring light into the world (See Jn 1:5-9; 3:19-21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9ff; 12:35ff; Cl 1:12). **No darkness at all:** This is a double negative in Greek. The emphasis is thus emphatic. There is absolutely no wickedness, fear, sin, or evil in God (See Js 1:13,14,17). Only God can be of the nature that John explains here. The metaphor that God is light carries with it the meaning that all that exists must originate from God. There is no eternal parallel existence apart from the light, and thus, neither Satan nor any other being is eternal light or eternal in existence. The dualist is wrong, since matter is not inherently eternal. Only God, who is spirit, is eternal, and thus all things have come from God who created all that exists out of that which is not seen (Hb 11:3).

1:6 In verse 7 John stated the realm in which we must walk if we claim to be of God and in Christ. We must walk in the light. However, there were those who walked outside the law, and yet, claimed to be without sin. They claimed to be walking in the light, but were actually walking in darkness. John here argues against this teaching that is referred to as Antinomianism. This is the teaching that one can supposedly remain in a right relationship with God, but at the same time, willfully continue in a life-style that is contrary to the commandments of God

(See 2 Co 6:14). But John says that the one who continues to sin, while he says he has fellowship with God, is deceiving himself (See Gl 6:7,8). **Walk in darkness:** This is behaving after the will of Satan and in contrast to the light of the truth of God (2:9-11). If one's behavior is not directed by the truth that proceeds from the light of God, then he does not walk in the truth (2:29; compare Mt 7:21-23). **Walk ... lie ... do not:** It is significant that John uses here the progressive tense of continuous action. He is not talking about the occasional sin that the Christian will commit in a moment of weakness. He is speaking of a behavioral pattern of life. If one's manner of life is after the nature of this world, then he is living a life of sin (See Jn 8:12; Rm 6:4; Ep 2:1-3; 5:8; compare 1 Jn 2:9-11). However, walking in the light means living according to the commandments of God (5:3; Jn 14:15; 15:14). **The truth:** This word is here introduced by John to refer to the behavioral standard by which Christians must conduct their lives (See 2:21; 3:19; Jn 17:17; 2 Jn 2-4). That standard is after the nature of the eternal *Logos* who revealed the light from God in which we must live. The one who is in fellowship with God and the apostles, is the one who is behaving after the truth, and thus, he is walking in the light (See vs 3).

1:7 Walk in the light: If we conduct ourselves after the truth that was revealed to all men through Jesus and the apostles, then our lives are brought into conformity with God. Fellowship is established between God and man (See Jn

8:12; Ep 5:8). One cannot, therefore, walk in the light if he is ignorant of the word of God. Those who are seeking to walk in the light are those who seek to know the will of God (Compare At 17:11). They are thus students of the word of God. **Walk:** John here uses the present active subjunctive which could be translated, "If we keep on walking in the light." The subjunctive assumes a condition. The condition for remaining in the light is to continue our obedience of the truth. This is the condition for receiving the blessing of the continual cleansing of one's sins. **The blood ... cleanses:** The atoning blood of Jesus that was poured forth from the cross is the only means by which men can receive forgiveness of sin (At 4:12; 1 Co 6:11; Ep 1:7; Hb 9:14; 1 Pt 1:19; Rv 1:5). The present tense of the verb "cleansing" emphasizes that the blood keeps on cleansing those who keep on walking after the behavioral standard of the light. The repentant life, therefore, reaps the continual cleansing of one's sins. In reference to the salvation of the Christian, it is not that he is saved one day and lost the next. The continual cleansing power of the blood of Jesus maintains the Christian's continual salvation. It is upon the basis of the cleansing blood, therefore, that the Christian can confidently affirm that he is saved. He is saved, not on the basis of meritorious works (See Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; Ep 2:1-10), but on the basis of the continual cleansing blood of Jesus. Neither is one saved because he has perfectly kept the law, for no one can keep law perfectly in order to demand salvation (Rm

3:23). All have sinned, and thus, salvation must depend on the grace of God that is extended to the obedient through the grace of God.

1:8 If we say: John uses this statement three times in this context in order to introduce the teaching of those who were proclaiming a Gnostic theology that one can live contrary to the light, and yet, maintain the blessings of the light (vss 6,8,10). **Have no sin:** The teaching that is explained by John here is that one had no sin while at the same time he did not obey God's commandments (Compare Jb 9:1; Ec 7:20; Js 3:2). Keep in mind that John uses the word "sin" to refer to a way of life. He does not use the Greek article before the word "sin," and thus, this is sin as the demeanor or manner of one's behavior. In other words, these sinners were those who had no concept of doing wrong. They believed that what they were doing was right. They had deceived themselves into believing that one could live according to a life-style in which they claimed to have no sin, and yet, be pleasing to God (See comments Rm 3:9,10,23; compare comments Ep 2:1-3). **Truth is not in us:** The truth does not dwell in and permeate the heart of the proud who do not recognize and confess their sin (2:24; see Lk 18:10-14). The first step in living the godly life under the grace of God is to recognize the impossibility of man to live without sin (See comments Mt 5:3-12).

1:9 If we confess: Christians must continually and humbly keep on acknowledging their sin (See Ps 32:5). This is the nature of walking in the light. In

other words, one who is walking in the light is continually confessing his sin. Reference here is to a demeanor of life. It is natural for the one who walks in the light to recognize and confess his sin to God (See Ps 32:5; 51:2; Pv 26:13). This is the condition upon which one receives the continual cleansing of sin by the blood of Jesus. Sin refers to transgression of God's law, and thus, confession of sin is to God, not man (See 2:1; 1 Tm 2:5; Hb 7:25; 10:19,20). Confession of sin is the nature of those who walk in the light. It is evidence that they are in the light. **Faithful and just:** These are the attributes of God who promised forgiveness because He is righteous and just (See Ps 143:1; compare Rm 3:21-26). God is proclaimed righteous because He has offered the sacrificial atonement for sin through the blood of Jesus (Rm 3:25). He is faithful because He did not create man a free-moral being without a plan of atonement for man's problem of sin (Ep 3:8-12). He is thus just because He has offered atonement for all men, for no man could atone for his sins by either law-keeping or good works. God both forgives and cleanses. Forgiveness refers to forgetting (Hb 10:17). Cleansing refers to sanctifying one's soul in order that he be able to approach God (2:12; Ps 51:2; 1 Co 6:11). God is righteous and just, therefore, because He has offered all spiritual blessings in reference to man's salvation through the cross (See comments Ep 1:3).

1:10 His word is not in us: If we do not confess our sins, we are saying that God is a liar because He says that we do

sin. He says, "*There is none righteous, no, not one... for all have sinned...*" (Rm 3:9,10,23). God's word does not dwell in and control the life of the one who willfully carries on in a life that is contrary to God. God's word dwells in the one who has submitted to the kingdom reign of Jesus (See comments Mt 6:9,10; Lk 17:20,21). His word dwells in the righteous because they are obedient (See 2:14; Jn 8:37; 2 Jn 4,6; 3 Jn 4). John is saying, therefore, that those who do not confess their sins are (1) lying (vs 6), (2) deceiving themselves (vs 8), and (3) making God a liar (vs 10). Such people do not have the indwelling word of God because their lives are not being controlled by God's word. They are walking in darkness, though they think they are walking in the light. This is the deception of those of the religious world who walk contrary to the word of God, while at the same time, they have constructed religions after their own traditions or personal feelings. They claim to walk in the light of God's word, but actually, they are walking in the darkness of religious deception (See comments Mk 7:1-9; 2 Th 2:10-12). One who walks after the religious traditions of his fathers is not walking after God, but after his fathers. One who walks after the authority of his own desires is not walking after God, but after the directions of his own feelings. One who walks after his own intellect is not walking after God because he is trusting in his own mental abilities to scheme his relationship with God. It is for this reason that John stresses throughout this letter the necessity of walking after the

commandments of God. One is blessed with assurance within when he knows that he is walking according to the will of God who is greater than his own will. We feel confident when we serve God. We feel confident when we know the word of God, and thus know that we are walking according to His word.

Validation of Fellowship

(2:1-29)

Outline: (1) Keeping His commandments (2:1-6), (2) The new commandment (2:7-11), (3) Assurance of God's fellowship (2:12-14), (4) Shun the world (2:15-17), (5) Antichrists (2:18-25), (6) The anointing (2:26-29)

CHAPTER 2

KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS

There should actually be no chapter division between the last verse of chapter 1 and the thoughts that are introduced here. John continues in the first verse of chapter 2 with the advocacy of Jesus in reference to our sin. Since there is no possible way for man within himself, through either mental or behavioral ability, to reconcile himself to God, then there is the necessity of God to provide the solution for sin (See comments Rm 7:24,25). That solution is Jesus Christ (Ti 2:11).

2:1 My little children: John was possibly an old man at the time of writing, and thus, he addressed his readers from the viewpoint of an elder to a flock that needed guarding against the doctrinal trials that had come upon them (See 2:12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21). This could also indicate that his readers were his converts (See 1 Co 4:15; 3 Jn 4). **That you do not sin:** Emphasis here is not on committing acts of sin, for all Christians in times of weakness will commit sin against God. What John does warn against is the possibility of allowing an act of sin to become a habit of life. Or,

one may refuse to repent of an act of sin by not confessing such to God. Acts of sin are forgiven upon the condition of humble confession. However, when sin becomes a behavioral pattern of life, then fellowship is broken with God (1:3; Is 59:1,2). **Counselor:** In the gospel according to John, John used this same Greek word (*parakletos*) in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit with the apostles (Jn 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). In reference to the Holy Spirit's work with the apostles, Jesus promised the apostles, in view of His departure, that the Spirit would be called along beside them. The Holy Spirit would be their *parakletos* on earth in order to inspire them with all truth. In reference to Jesus as our advocate, He is the One we call along beside us in the heavenly realm in order to receive help with our problem of sin. He is the One who pleads our case. He is the one who has offered atonement, and thus, works for our forgiveness. **With the Father:** John wants us to understand that Jesus is close by the Father, for He is one with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Hb 2:17,18; 8:1ff). It is not that the Father is distant. The meaning is that the Son works in a close relationship with

the Godhead in order to carry out His work of atonement for the sins of the saved. However, we must keep in mind that the relationship between the Father and Son cannot be explained with words of this world. The Son is “close” with the Father in the sense that He is one with the Father.

2:2 Atoning sacrifice for our sins:

The English word “propitiation” is often used here by translators, and in 4:10 and Romans 3:25. It is used to translate the Greek word *hilasmos*. However, “atoning sacrifice” is a more definitive translation. In John’s use of the word, he brings into the context a Greek word that means appeasement for sin, conciliation, or rendering one favorable to God through an atoning sacrifice. The word refers to Jesus’ expiation for our sin because of His atoning sacrifice to remove man’s guilt of sin (Rm 3:25; Hb 2:17). Because Jesus has functioned in this manner in reference to man’s sin problem, we are able to have peace with God (Rm 5:1,2,11; 2 Co 5:18,19).

2:3 We know that we know Him:

This is a common phrase that is used by John in order to accomplish his purpose for writing, that is, to reassure his readers of their salvation (vs 5; 3:16,19,24; 4:2,6,13; 5:2). Reassurance comes from depending on God’s will, not by affirming that one has no sin. John wants us to know that with confidence we can acknowledge the fact that we have a relationship with God because we keep His commandments. It is not that we keep His commandments perfectly. Such is not possible for man. The relationship

does not depend upon perfectionism, but upon a reliance on the grace of God as we respond to grace with obedient faith (See comments Rm 3:31; 1 Co 15:10). We know God through our obedience to His will because it is to His will that we have responded to His grace and love (4:19). As His will permeates and controls our lives, we come to understand who He is (4:7-11; see comments Jn 17:3). **If we keep His commandments:** This is the Greek present tense, and thus, emphasis is on continuous action. If one is keeping the commandments of God, then he is living a life in response to God. Our loving obedience is in response to His action toward us through Jesus (4:19; see 2 Co 4:15). Therefore, it is our response to the commandments of God that manifests our response to God. The self-made religious traditions of men cannot proclaim one to be obedient to God because traditions originate with man and not God (See comments Mk 7:1-9; compare Jn 15:10; 17:3; Ti 1:16). If we respond to religious traditions, then we are not responding to God, but to our fathers. Only through our love of God’s word, and our obedient response to His word, can we claim to be following God. **Commandments:** Throughout John’s letter he refers to the will of God by using different words or phrases. Here he uses the word “commandments.” He also uses such words and phrases as “the message,” “the word,” “that which we have heard,” “the truth,” “the light,” “these things,” and “all things.” His emphasis is on the fact that one is a son of God because he has given his life in obedience to the in-

structions of God, not the self-imposed dictates of man.

2:4 The Gnostics affirmed a salvation that came as a result of recognizing the inner light that was supposedly within one. Through a knowledge that was acquired by spiritual insights and awareness one could supposedly claim salvation regardless of one's obedience to the law of God (1:6). But if one affirms salvation apart from a guiding reference to God's law, then he establishes his salvation upon his own terms. The legalistic Jews established their salvation upon their ability to perform their law of religious codes and meritorious good works. The Gnostics established their salvation upon their own self-awareness. Both systems of religion take one away from focusing on the commandments of God, and thus, are futile in reference to salvation. Both systems lead to a self-proclamation of one's salvation that is based on the ability of man, and not the grace of God (Compare Mt 7:21). The result of both systems of religiosity lead to arrogance in reference to one's salvation, for both systems are based on the abilities of man. When anyone seeks salvation in reference to God, who is the only one before whom we are to be saved, then it is absolutely necessary that one direct his life according to God's terms of salvation.

2:5 *Keeps His word:* These are God's terms for salvation. John's use here of the Greek present tense is significant in reference to the nature of the message he is writing. The present tense emphasizes continuous action. In this

context and others the emphasis is on a behavioral manner of life (See Jn 14:15,21,23; 15:10). Therefore, in order for the truth of God to dwell in us (vs 4), we must be obedient to that truth as a manner of life. In this verse, John has now substituted the word "word" for the word "commandments," and the word "love" for the word "know." In doing this, he will define for us the nature of the love we must have toward God and our fellow man as a manner of life. It is a love that must be manifested by action (5:3; see comments Mt 22:37-40; Gl 5:13,14,22,23). ***Perfected ... in Him:*** It is not that we can attain unto perfect living. All men sin (Rm 3:9,10,23). John's "perfection" is in reference to the advocacy of Jesus through His blood to solve our sin problem. His blood keeps on cleansing us of sin (1:7). It is only through His blood that we will be presented perfect in Christ before God (See comments Cl 1:28). Therefore, "in Him" is the same as "in Christ." We know that we are "in Him" and He in us if we allow His will to control our lives (4:13). Obedience to the truth (commandments) brings assurance that we are in Him, and thus, in fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (See Ph 1:1; Rm 3:24; 8:1; Gl 3:26,27; compare Jn 15:4,5). In studying this context, we must not twist John's statements to mean that one keeps the commandments of God on a meritorious basis, that is, to obey meritoriously the law and do good deeds in order to earn one's salvation. Such a teaching would contradict Paul's statement that no one can be saved by perfect law-keeping

(See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). Salvation can never be based on the merit of our obedience to law because no man can keep law perfectly. One is saved on the basis of his response to God's grace that was manifested on the cross (Ti 2:11). Our obedience is never perfect before God. But God's grace toward us is always complete. Therefore, we must not trust in our ability to perform law perfectly, but in His grace to pardon our insufficient obedience. John's message is based on an argument against those who thought that they could ignore law by constructing their own salvational conditions through inner enlightenment or self-justification. His answer is that we cannot ignore God's law when dealing with God because it is before God we must either stand or fall in reference to judgment according to law (2 Jn 9,10). Since no one can stand just on the merit of his own performance of law, then we must approach God through the advocacy of Jesus who gave Himself for us. We must do so in order that the grace of God might touch all of us who come to God on the basis of obedient faith (Rm 5:1,2).

2:6 Ought ... to walk: If we claim allegiance to God, then we have a moral obligation to follow in Jesus' steps because He died for our sins (Mt 11:29; 1 Pt 2:21). One cannot claim to be of God and His Son if he refuses to comply with the will of God (See Jn 14:15; 15:14; 2 Jn 9,10). It is only those who live according to the will of God who will remain in fellowship with both the Father and Son (1:3; Jn 15:10,14).

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

2:7,8 John here uses a paradox that is a supposed contradiction. He does so in order to show that knowing God is based on behaving after the manner of God, that is, doing the will of God. **No new commandment ... an old commandment:** The first and second commandments refer to love. One must love God above all things and his neighbor as himself (Mt 22:37-40). The old commandment was love, for God expected His people to be motivated by love, both in their reference to Him, as well as in their relationships with one another (Lv 19:18; Dt 10:19; Mc 6:8). **From the beginning:** Since reference here is to the beginning of either their conversion or the church—it would make no difference—then the commandment they had heard was to “*love one another as I have loved you*” (Jn 13:34,35; see 1 Jn 3:11,23; 4:21; 2 Jn 5). This was the message (the word) that they had been taught from the very beginning when they were converted. **New commandment:** The word “new” is from *kainos* which refers to new in form or quality, not new in time. The commandment, though old, is still new. It is new in quality. If we compare the commandment of love in reference to that which was given in the Old Testament, then it would be new in degree. In His sacrifice for us, Jesus illustrated the degree of the love we must express toward one another (Jn 13:34). We must love “even as” He loved us (3:11; Jn 13:34,35; see Jn 15:12,13; 1 Jn 3:16). The love (*agape*) Jesus brought into the world was uncon-

ditional love. It was not “love as you love yourself,” but love “even as I have loved you.” Jesus loved unconditionally. It is the nature of the commandment of love that Jesus brought that it flows even to one’s enemies (Mt 5:44). The expression of love in the life of the loving is the spiritual energy that continually refreshes one’s existence. It is the exercising of the principle in life that brings the abundant life (Jn 10:10). **Darkness is passing:** Superstition that is based on ignorance fades away as one comes to a knowledge of God through obedience to His will (See Rm 13:12; Gl 1:4; Ep 4:11-16; 5:8; Cl 1:13). **The true Light:** Jesus is the true light that has brought to light the gospel of God (Jn 3:19-21; 8:12; see Jn 1:5; Rm 13:12). When the gospel is preached, the light of the truth dispels the darkness of superstitious religions that are based on the ignorance of man (See comments At 17:19-31).

2:9 Hates his brother: The word “hate” is used here to emphasize the disposition one has toward his brother. If he has a continual evil disposition, then his unloving attitude “murders” his brother (See comments 1 Co 13:1-3; 2 Pt 1:9). In other words, he would be maintaining the same unloving disposition against his brother that a murderer would have toward his victim. **In darkness:** The unloving brother is the one who is still conducting his life after the darkness of the world (See Mt 6:23; Rm 13:12-14; 2 Co 6:14; 1 Th 5:5; see comments Ep 2:1-3).

2:10 He who loves: We must understand that John is talking about more

than emotions and feelings. Throughout this epistle he is speaking concerning a love that is active (3:18; 5:3; see Gl 5:6). The one who truly loves his brother is the one who is looking out for the welfare of his brother. **No cause for stumbling:** “Stumbling” is from the Greek word that refers to casting a snare in order to cause one to fall or be caught. The one who has his brother’s well-being at heart will not behave in a manner that would cause his brother to fall (Compare Mt 18:7; Rm 13:8-10; 14; 1 Co 8; 2 Pt 1:10).

2:11 The one who does not love his brother is trapped in an evil disposition. He is in darkness. He is walking in darkness (1:6; Jn 12:35). He thus does not know where he is going. Sin has blinded the unloving brother (2 Co 4:4; Hb 3:13; 2 Pt 1:5-9; see Ps 82:5; Jn 12:35; compare Lk 11:35; Jn 3:19; Rm 1:21; 2 Co 6:14; Ep 5:8; 6:12; Cl 1:13).

ASSURANCE OF GOD’S FELLOWSHIP

2:12-14 Bible students have differed concerning whether John in this section is talking about three different age groups or three different stages or levels of spiritual growth among his readers. Since the context of the letter is directed toward those who are struggling against false teachers who are claiming to be spiritually superior, the preferred interpretation is that he is discussing spiritual growth. He thus gives exhortation and assurance to every disciple in whatever stage of growth he may be in his Christian life. He directs his exhortation to “little children,” “fathers,” and “young men.” He

uses these figures metaphorically in order to admonish three groups of disciples to whom he is writing. He did not intend that the exhortations to each group apply exclusively to that group. The exhortations generically apply to all three groups, though specifically to each group. He addresses them from his standpoint as the writer when he says "I am writing." He addresses them from their standpoint after they have received the letter when he writes "I have written." He uses the word *teknia* to refer to "children" (vs 12). These were the new converts who had just been washed of their sins at the time of their obedience to the gospel through immersion (At 22:16; see 1 Pt 2:1,2). These were new babes in Christ, and thus, were of a tender and innocent spiritual state in their spiritual growth. They would grow from *teknia* ("little children") to *paidia* in verse 14. The word *paidia* refers to an older child. The "young men" of verse 13 were those Christians who had great spiritual strength as the physical strength of young men. "Fathers" were those who had been Christians the longest, and thus, had spiritually grown the most. **Forgiven:** John uses the perfect tense in order to explain a past action of forgiveness in reference to sins, which action continued throughout the Christian's life as long as one walked in the light (1:7; see At 22:16). **His name's sake:** The sins of all Christians have been forgiven for the sake of the name of Jesus (Lk 24:47; At 4:12). Because of Jesus' sacrificial offering, we are cleansed of sin at the time of obedience to the gospel and continually

cleansed by His blood throughout our faithful life as a Christian (1:7). The forgiveness of our sins, therefore, exemplifies Jesus. His atoning sacrifice is proclaimed sufficient because of the forgiveness of sins. **The word of God abides in you:** The fact that they were walking in the light was evidence that the word of God indwelt them (1:10; Cl 3:16). As the will of the Father permeated and directed their lives, then it was dwelling within them (At 20:32; 1 Th 2:13). The word of God does not abide in the one who is following his own religiosity. For this reason, one must know and obey the word of God in order to have God dwelling in him.

SHUN THE WORLD

2:15 Do not love the world: Christians are not to attach themselves to the thinking of the world in a way that they are diverted from keeping their minds on those things that are above (Cl 3:1,2; see comments Rm 12:2). **Things in the world:** The Christian must not be directed in his life by the evil values and morals that are maintained by those deceived by Satan. It is impossible for one to love God with the intensity of love by which God demands that we serve Him, and at the same time, compromise his values and morals by living after the world (See 4:4; Mt 6:24; Rm 8:5; 12:2; 2 Co 6:17,18; Cl 3:1,2; Js 1:14,15; 4:4). Whenever there is a compromise in one's relationship with the world and God, lukewarmness or apostasy in reference to the truth results (See comments Rv 3:15,16). One's relationship with the

world must be defined and controlled by his love of God.

2:16 In the context of erroneous religious beliefs and behavior, John defines those religions that are centered around the carnal life. ***Lust of the flesh:*** In the world there are temptations that are produced wherein one is drawn away from the love of God to satisfy the desires of the flesh in an ungodly manner (See Rm 1:24; 6:12; 1 Co 6:12-20; Gl 5:16-23; Ep 2:3; 2 Pt 2:18). Legalistic religions are centered on the performance of the flesh. Pagan religions often focus on the satisfaction of the lust of the flesh through fornication. ***Lust of the eyes:*** Temptations are often produced by looking upon things in an evil manner (See Ec 5:11; Mt 5:28; see comments 1 Co 13:5,6). Ceremonial religions focus on the performance of ceremonies in order to stimulate a spiritual experience. ***Pride of life:*** Temptation is often motivated by our selfish ambition for power and recognition. In the garden of Eden, Eve was drawn after the lust of the flesh, eyes and pride of life (Gn 3:6). In the wilderness, Satan also tempted Jesus away from His destiny through the same lusts and pride (See comments Mt 4). He tempts all men today through the same means in order to draw people away from God. In the religions of the world, men often focus on the pomp of personalities and power of religious structures.

2:17 ***The world is passing away:*** Whenever one considers loving the world, he must remember that all that is of the world is temporary (See 1 Co 7:31; 2 Co 4:18; 1 Pt 1:24; 2 Pt 3:10,11). Those

who would pattern their lives after the world, therefore, have forgotten that they have attached themselves to something that will not exist forever. If they have not patterned their thinking after that which is eternal, they will not be prepared to exist in eternity. It is for this reason that worldly minded people will not inherit eternal life. They will not have the mental attitude that is necessary to exist in eternal dwelling with those who have focused on heavenly things (Rm 12:3; Cl 3:1,2). It is the one who is doing the will of God, and thus, focusing on things beyond himself and this world, who is preparing his mind for eternity.

ANTICHRISTS

2:18 ***It is the last hour:*** Since the Holy Spirit did not deceive the New Testament writers into believing that Jesus was about to come in His final coming in their lifetime, then John would not here be talking about the end of time (See comments Js 5:7,8). John's reference here is probably to the finality of the Jewish dispensation through the consummation of national Israel. If the letter were written before A.D. 70, then John is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of national Israel. There would be a last time before the coming of Jesus in the end of time. However, emphasis in the New Testament is not primarily on prophecy concerning events of the last days before the final coming. On the contrary, the New Testament apostles and prophets spoke much about the events that Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24 concerning the termination of na-

tional Israel (See comments Mt 24). Therefore, John and his readers were in a last hour, a time of crises and stress before the fall of national Israel. It was a time of apostasy and heresy, a time of great persecution against Christians by the Jews who arrogantly supposed that God would never terminate His relationship with Israel. **You have heard:** The recipients of this letter had been taught concerning the prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24, for the prophecy of Jesus was made in order to keep Jews away from Judea at the time they saw the signs of the end of Israel (See 2 Th 2:3; 1 Tm 4:1ff; 2 Tm 3:1ff; 2 Pt 2:1ff; Jd 4ff). They knew the prophecies of the prophets who spoke of the consummation of national Israel (Is 10:20-23; Dn 9:24-27) **Antichrist:** The Greek word here (*antichristoi*) refers to one who sets himself against Christ (Messiah). The word "Christ," meaning "the anointed one," is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew Messiah. One may set himself against Christ, the Messiah, by denying the messiahship of Jesus, or by putting himself in the place of the Christ. He is thus against Christ by accepting from others the allegiance that should be given to Christ as the Messiah (See 4:3; 2 Jn 7). Jesus prophesied in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem that many would come claiming that they were the Christ (Messiah) (See Mt 24:5,23-25). In His prophecy, Jesus speaks of a plurality of those who would claim to be christs (messiahs) in Matthew 24. They would reject Jesus as the Messiah. Many would be looking for a messiah who would lead

them in throwing off the oppression of Roman occupation of Palestine. By the time John wrote, John spoke of many antichrists who had gone out in the world (See vs 22; 4:3). These were those who were denying the messiahship of Jesus. In 2 John 7 he identifies the doctrine of those who were antichrists. "*For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and antichrist.*" The Greek article is not before the word "antichrist," and thus reference is not to a specific person, but to those who denied the messiahship of Jesus. Those who denied that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah), were antichrists. Jesus spoke of Jews who would rise up in order to call fellow Jews into insurrection against Rome. They would claim to be the Messiah. John speaks of those in the fellowship of the disciples who would deny the incarnation. If Jesus were only a man, then He was not the Messiah. The word "antichrist" would apply to those who denied the incarnation, but specifically to those who denied the messiahship of Jesus. An antichrist was anyone who set himself against the work of Christ, either by proclaiming himself to be Christ (Messiah) or teaching those things that are contrary to Christ. **By this we know it is the last hour:** Since Jesus used the false christs (messiahs) and false prophets as a sign to warn Christians to flee Jerusalem before A.D. 70 (Mt 24:16), John also uses the presence of antichrists to signify the presence of the last days of national Israel. There were false messiahs claiming to be the messiah. These

led many Jews in rebellion against Rome. Their presence at the time John wrote is evidence that this letter was written before A.D. 70.

2:19 *They went out from us:* John identifies the antichrists about whom he speaks as those who were once in the fellowship of the disciples (See 4:1-6; 5:6-12; compare 2 Pt 2:20-22). However, they left the community of disciples, and thus, were no longer in the fellowship of the saints. It was not that they gave up religiosity in order to live unrighteous lives. They doctrinally and behaviorally left the truth in order to create religious beliefs and behavior after their own desires. In this historical context, it seems that some of the Jewish Christians succumbed to their Jewishness, and thus took sides with those Jews who rose up in rebellion against Rome (See comments in intro. to Hb). ***They were not of us:*** They did not have the same spirit of obedience to Jesus as the Christ as those who remained faithful by walking in the commandments of God. It seems that John is saying that they were not truly converted at the time of their supposed conversion to the behavioral manner of life that is motivated by one's response to the grace of God (See Mt 13:20,21; Jn 6:37; 1 Tm 1:19; Jd 19). When one responds to God's grace by faith, law is established in one's life (See comments Rm 3:31). However, these about whom John wrote had not so responded to the grace of God in view of their own inadequacy to save themselves. In their arrogance, they claimed to be in the light, and yet, they walked outside the commandments of

God (1:7-9). Since they claimed to have no sin, they felt no need for the grace of God. John wants us to know that on their own accord they left the fellowship of the disciples because they did not firmly believe that Jesus was the Christ. These were possibly those who had obeyed the gospel with false pretenses. It may be that they had not grown in the faith to be able to withstand the onslaught of false philosophies or doctrines that tossed them to and fro (See comments Mt 13:3-9,18-23; Ep 4:11-16).

2:20 *An anointing from the Holy One:* The word for "anointing" (*christoi*) stands in contrast to the *antichristoi* (antichrist) who worked against all that Christ did through His sacrificial offering. Jesus was the anointed One of God. He was the Christ, the Messiah of Israel (At 4:27; Hb 1:9). He was anointed with the Holy Spirit (At 10:38; see 2 Co 1:21,22). The result of the anointing that John's readers received was that they knew all things. Since the result of the anointing was their knowledge of all things, the anointing probably refers to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of the prophets among them, which anointing came first as a result of Jesus sending the Holy Spirit upon the apostles (See Lk 24:49; Jn 14:15-18; 1 Co 1:21). No one had to come and teach them because their inspired teachers taught them all things (vs 27). The result of the anointing was that they could test the spirits of those who came to them (4:1; see 1 Co 12:10; Rv 2:2). They received the anointing as a result of the Holy One (Jesus) sending the Holy Spirit (Jn 6:69; At 3:14; Rv 3:7).

The Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands (See comments At 8:18). Since John personally knew the readers to whom he wrote, we would assume that he had personally imparted the Spirit to them by the laying on of his hands. They knew all things that were necessary to know in reference to their salvation (See comments 2 Tm 3:16,17).

2:21 *The truth:* They had a knowledge of "all things" (vs 20). Reference is to a knowledge of those things that pertain to what was revealed through Jesus (Jn 1:17). Their knowledge of who Jesus was revealed to them through the preaching of the gospel on which they stood (See comments 1 Co 15:1-4). In these statements, John contrasts the knowledge the Christian has of the truth with the alleged knowledge the Gnostic false teachers claimed that supposedly elevated them above those who did not have such spiritual insights.

2:22 *The one who denies that Jesus is the Christ:* The Cerinthian sect of Gnostics denied the deity of Jesus. They claimed that Jesus as a man was totally human. They affirmed that "Jesus" and "Christ" were two different beings. "Christ" was deity; "Jesus" was just a man on whom the deity, "Christ," descended at His baptism. "Jesus," the man, died on the cross. He subsequently went to the grave and stayed there. However, "Christ" the deity, did not suffer. He ascended to the Father at the time of the crucifixion. The antichrist is the one who teaches the false doctrine that Jesus is not the Christ (See Jn 5:23; 2 Jn 7).

This is the one John identifies as the liar. His denial of Jesus as the Christ demands that He deny the Father, for the Father and Son are one. Therefore, to deny the incarnation of God in the Son is to deny the plan of salvation. Those who would deny that Jesus was incarnate God on earth are actually denying the work of God in incarnation to offer sacrifice in atonement for man's sins. The Jewish Gnostic would deny that Jesus was the Messiah. He would believe that Jesus could not have been the Messiah simply because his body was still somewhere in a tomb. Some Gnostics believed that Jesus revived in the tomb and then went to Egypt where He died an old man.

2:23 *Does not have the Father:* The one who would deny that Jesus as the Son came from the Father, does not know or understand the Father. One cannot claim to have a correct understanding of the Father without accepting the Son, for the Son was the manifestation of God on earth. What John is saying here is that there is no possible way to connect with the Father except through the Son (Jn 14:6; see At 4:12). Anyone who would distort who the Son was in His incarnate state, therefore, cannot have fellowship with the Father (1:3), for the Son reveals the Father (Jn 1:18; 14:6,9; 15:23; 2 Jn 9).

2:24 *Abide in you:* That which they had heard from the beginning was the gospel of the incarnate Son of God dying on the cross for their redemption and resurrection for their hope. This was the foundation upon which they stood in reference to their salvation (See comments

Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4). Since they had obeyed the gospel (the truth), they had come into fellowship with God (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27). Their obedience to the gospel also brought the Father and Son into their lives as they were now directed by the will of God (1:6-9; Jn 14:23; compare At 20:32; 1 Th 2:13; 2 Jn 6).

2:25 *The promise:* See Jn 17:3. In knowing the Father and Son, one has the promise of continuing into eternity (Ph 3:9; Ti 1:2; Hb 6:18,19; Rv 14:13). While in life, Christians have eternal life on the condition of their faithfulness. They have the promise of an eternal existence that is beyond this world (5:11). The assurance of the Christian is that he now has eternal life in Christ. However, he must always remember that his eternal life is conditioned on his continual walk in the light.

THE ANOINTING

2:26 *Deceive you:* There were those who were in the presence of the disciples who were trying to lead them astray (vs 18; see At 20:29; 1 Tm 4:1-3; 2 Jn 7). It seems that those who went out from the community of the Christians were still having an effect on the faithful (4:1-6). John sees the apostates as having already left, but reaching back to deceive, and thus, influence others who would follow after their antichrist doctrines.

2:27 *The anointing:* This verse clearly states that the “anointing” (*cristoi*) “teaches you concerning all things.” This would be a reference to the miraculous gift of prophecy that was possessed by some of those to whom John wrote. The Holy Spirit thus taught the

disciples what was true. They did not need the false teachers to teach them anything concerning the fundamental truths of Christianity (vs 20; see comments At 2:38,39; 8:18). ***Abides in you:*** The word “abide” here refers to that which remains in them. God (4:11-16; 1 Co 3:16; 6:16; Ph 2:13; 1 Th 1:1), Christ (Rm 8:10; 2 Co 5:17; Gl 2:20; Ep 3:17), the Holy Spirit (Rm 8:11; 1 Co 3:16; Gl 5:16), and the mind or will of the Godhead (2:14; 1 Co 2:16; Ph 2:5; Cl 3:16) all abide in the Christian. All abide in the Christian insofar as the Christian brings his life into conformity with the will of God. In this passage, John wants to reassure the faithful to whom he writes that they are indwelt with God. They must not allow the arrogance of those who have gone out from them to cause them to question their own salvation. If they remain faithful to the teaching that the anointing teaches them, then they will remain in a saved relationship with God. It is important, therefore, that one believe the right things concerning fundamental doctrines (See comments Ep 4:4-6). Our beliefs concerning that which is fundamental in reference to our salvation will affect our behavior. If we maintain erroneous beliefs concerning that which is fundamental, then our behavior will not be according to the will of God.

2:28 *Abide in Him:* This is an imperative command of John. It is the same as John’s instructions concerning walking in the light (1:6-9), keeping His commandments (5:2,3), and walking in the truth (3 Jn 3). If we remain obedient to the commandments of God, then we will

maintain our fellowship with God (1:3; see Jn 14:15). **We may have confidence:** It is not that we trust in our performance of law in order to be saved, for no one can keep law perfectly in order to save himself (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). Obedience to God's commandments is evidence that we are responding to the grace of God (See comments Rm 3:31; 1 Co 15:10). Our response to God's will is the assurance that we are abiding in God and He in us (3:21; 4:17; 5:14; Ep 3:12). **At His coming:** "Coming" is translated from *parousia* which could just as well be rendered "presence." Reference here does not have to be to the final coming, but to "a" last hour about which John has already spoken (vs 18). This would be any hour of crisis wherein the Christian can have boldness (See 4:17,18). However, if the epistle were written in the latter part of the 60s, then reference would be to the last times before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24; Js 5:7,8). The presence of Jesus was made known through the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus had prophesied the consummation of national Israel (Mt 24). His prophecy, as well as the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets, came true, and thus Jesus was proclaimed through the fulfillment of the prophecies to be the Messiah. His presence among the disciples was proclaimed because of the fulfillment of the prophecies.

2:29 He is righteous: Jesus is the Righteous One (At 22:14). He is the Righteous One who has brought life into the world. **Practices righteousness:** Ev-

eryone who obeys Jesus' commandments is of God (Jn 14:15). Jesus is the revelation of the word of God to man, therefore, all those who obey Him are born of God (1 Pt 1:23). It is by this obedient relationship one has with God that John says his readers can identify those who are born of God (See comments Mt 7:15-23). **Born from Him:** We are brought forth from God when we obey the revelation of the *Logos* (See 3:9,18; 4:7; 5:1,4,18). Since Christians have been brought forth from God by obedience to the *Logos*, then they are children of God (3:1,2,10; 5:2; see comments Jn 3:3-5; Gl 3:26,27). One's obedience to God's word, therefore, is evidence of his sonship (4:7,10; 1 Pt 1:23). John expands on these thoughts in the following verses. In 3:1-3 he explains what is included in our obedience. In 3:4-9 he explains what it excludes. He wants us to understand that we are born from Him through obedience to His word. It is for this reason that those who are ignorant of the word of God cannot be born from God. Those who would validate their sonship upon the basis of being obedient to religious traditions of men have deceived themselves. They are born from men, not God. Only when one can identify his obedience to the word of God can he claim to be born from God (See comments Gl 3:26-29).

Tests of Fellowship

(3:1 – 4:6)

Outline: (1) Children of God (3:1-3), (2) Definition of sin (3:4-9), (3) Obedient love (3:10-17), (4) Assurance (3:18-24), (5) False teachers (4:1-6)

CHAPTER 3

CHILDREN OF GOD

3:1 Behold: The Greek word (*idete*) here refers to gazing upon in order to be greatly influenced by what is seen. The word was used to explain the reaction of those who personally experienced miracles (Mk 13:1; Jn 19:5). John is astounded at the manner of love by which God has loved us (Jn 3:16). He is amazed that this love should result in men being called sons of God (3:10; 5:3; Jn 1:12; At 17:28; Rm 8:15; Gl 3:26,27; 4:5-7). His life, as well as thousands of others, was greatly influenced by the love that God poured forth on the cross (4:19). Because we are sons of God, the world does not know our identity nor does it identify with us. Those who are of the mentality of the world cannot understand the nature of those who live after the direction of God (See Jn 15:18,19; 16:3). It is not that the world cannot know. It is that the world does not want to know because those who are of the world enjoy that which is of the world.

3:2 It has not yet been revealed what we will be: Though we know that we are now children of God, we do not know what our bodily presence will be in the new heavens and earth that are yet to come (See Rm 8:18; 2 Co 4:17; 2 Pt 3:13). When Jesus comes, He “*will transform our lowly body that it may be fashioned according to His glorious body ...*” (Ph 3:21). In some way, therefore, our present body that is after the physical nature of this world, and sustained by the physical world, will be trans-

formed to be as Jesus' body (See comments 1 Co 15:51-54; 2 Co 5:1-8; compare Rm 8:29; 2 Pt 1:4). John was one who personally touched Jesus' body after His resurrection. However, he did not know the true nature of Jesus then or at the time He wrote these words. Therefore, neither he nor any other inspired writer knew the nature of the spiritual body of immortality in which we will indwell in eternal heaven. Since the Scriptures teach that there will be an embodiment for heaven, we do know that we will not be disembodied spirits. We will have location because of bodily presence, though we do not know the nature of the body we will have. Since there will be a resurrection of our body wherein it will be changed for eternal dwelling, then we know that we will be embodied for eternity.

3:3 Everyone who has this hope: John here explains the importance of the one hope about which Paul spoke in Ephesians 4:4-6. It is necessary that all Christians have the same hope concerning their resurrection and embodiment in order to be encouraged to live righteously. **Purifies:** The verb here is present tense, thus emphasizing the continuous action of a life-style that keeps on keeping oneself separated from the world. This is the one who obediently continues to walk in the light (1:7,9). He keeps himself in the love of God (Jd 21) by keeping the commandments of God (5:3; 2 Th 2:13,14; 1 Pt 1:22). Responsibility for faithfulness, therefore, is upon the shoulders of the

Christian. **Just as He is pure:** It is Christ who is pure. Those who keep themselves in the love of God by obedience to the commandments of Jesus (Jn 14:15), keep themselves pure by walking in the continual cleansing blood of Jesus (1:7-9). They will thus be presented perfect in Christ, not because of perfect obedience to the commandments, but because of the cleansing blood of Jesus (Cl 1:22,28).

DEFINITION OF SIN

3:4 Sin is lawlessness: In this context, sin is defined as a rebellious way of life against the will of God. Sin is the free-moral transgression of God's law (Rm 4:15). Sin is man's free-moral reaction against the law of God or man's free-moral non-reaction to the law of God (Js 4:17). In this context John speaks of one's free-moral reaction against the law of God (4:4; Rm 4:15; compare Mt 23:28; Rm 6:19; 2 Co 6:14). When one does not behave according to the will of God, then he sins against God. Children who are not at an age where they can make a free-moral response in reference to the law of God, therefore, are not living a life of sin. They are thus pure and safe from the wrath of God because they have not rebelled against that which they knew was God's law. The Bible nowhere teaches that there is sin that exists separate from the actions of man in reference to law. There is no such thing as an "inherited sin," for sin exists because free-moral individuals have made free-moral decisions contrary to the law of God.

3:5,6 Manifested to take away our sins: Jesus was sinless in reference to

God's law because He, as God, was the author of divine law (2:29; 2 Co 5:21; Hb 4:15; 9:14; 1 Pt 1:19). Because He was sinless, He could be the offering for those who were in sin (Is 53:5,6; Mt 1:21; Jn 1:29; Ti 2:14). **Does not sin:** The Greek present tense of the verb is important in this verse. The one who abides in Jesus does not "keep on sinning." He does not live a life of sin. Abiding in Him, and abiding in sin, stand in contrast to one another. If one is living the Christian life, he is not living in sin (1:7-9). He is keeping the commandments (5:2,3), and thus, does not live in sin (2:24). **Has not seen Him or known Him:** "Has not seen" is the perfect tense, thus emphasis is on the result. Those who abide in sin have no perception of God through either knowledge or experience. The one who has not given himself in submission to the will of God cannot understand the nature of God. If he does not love, he cannot understand the God who is love (4:8). The disobedient have no perception or understanding of those things that lie beyond the realm of the physical world (vss 3-5; compare comments 1 Co 3:1-3). It is only through obedience to God's word, therefore, that one can fully understand the God of the Bible. Those religions that validate their existence by authorities other than the Bible, therefore, cannot understand the God of the Bible. Their understanding of the God of the Bible is twisted, and their god in which they believe is different than the God of the Bible.

3:7,8 Let no one deceive you: The fact that the Christian can be deceived

demands this warning that they not be deceived (vs 18; 1:8; 4:1-3; see comments Mt 24:23,24; 2 Th 2:10-12). This warning also assumes that the Christian can be deceived to the point of falling from God's grace (See 1 Co 10:12). John's exhortation, therefore, is to continue practicing that which is right, that is, the commandments of God. In doing such, one will guard himself from falling away.

Who commits sins: This is the one who continues a life of sin. His sin is deliberate and willful (Hb 10:26; see Nm 15:30; 2 Pt 2:20-22). The occasional sins that Christians commit in times of weakness are continually forgiven through the cleansing blood of Jesus (1:7-9; 2:1,2). These sins are forgiven on the condition of a remorseful and repentant heart, which heart is not characteristic of those who knowingly continue in rebellion against God's will.

The devil: Satan willfully rebelled against the will of God (Mt 13:38; Jn 8:44). Since the creation of the world, he has continued in his rebellious sin. Those who would continue in rebellious sin, therefore, have Satan as their father because they are of the rebellious nature of Satan.

Destroy the works of the devil: The eternal *Logos* was incarnate for the very purpose of bringing down the kingdom of darkness (See Lk 10:18; Jn 12:31; 16:11; 1 Co 15:25,26; 2 Tm 1:10; Hb 2:14,15; Rv 21:4). Jesus destroyed the works of Satan in that He made Satan's works ineffective in the life of the one who walks in the light.

3:9 Born from God: "From God" is from *ek tou theou* which refers to

source, origin, cause or motive (See 4:7; 5:1,4,18). Those who are begotten sons of God have originated out of God who is the source of their being. No son of God would exist if it were not for the existence of God. From Him only is there spiritual sustenance of life wherein we might continue into eternal dwelling. Those who have been born of the water and Spirit (Jn 3:3-5; Rm 6:3-6), have been born again because they have submitted to the word of God (5:18; 1 Pt 1:23). Their new birth was based on the fact that they committed themselves to do the will of God (2:29). Their obedience to the gospel is the manifestation of their commitment to do the will of God (See comments Rm 6:3-6). All those who are born of God are identified as sons of God by their obedience to the word of God. No religious person who follows a religious authority other than the Bible can claim to be born of God, for God gives birth to those who submit to His will.

Does not commit sin: They do not continue in a life of sin because they have resolved to live after the will of God (3:6). The Greek present tense of the verb here emphasizes the fact that he does not carry on with the life of sin he was in before his obedience to the gospel (See comments Ep 2:1-3). The Christian does not keep on willfully sinning because he has obeyed from the heart the gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Rm 6:17). He has been born again by the incorruptible seed that is the word of God (Lk 8:11; 1 Pt 1:23; see Ps 119:11). Therefore, the Christian continues to walk in the righteousness of God (2:29)

in order that he remain in the light. Because of this walk, he does not desire to live a life of sin (3:6).

OBEDIENT LOVE

3:10 *Children ... are manifest:* If one is obedient to the gospel (Rm 6:3-6), and continues to walk in the commandments of God, then it is clear that he is a child of God (2:29). But if one refuses to walk in response to the gospel, it is clear that he does not have a heart of submission to the kingdom reign of Jesus. He is thus manifested to be a child of the devil. It is this person who does not have any concern for his brother in Christ.

3:11 *Love one another:* This is the foundation upon which law is based (See comments Mt 22:37-40). Law is based on love because love moves one to respond to the needs of others. Jesus reinstated and reemphasized the Sinai law to love one another. He lived and affirmed that we love one another as He loved us (2:7,8; Jn 13:34,35; 15:12,14; 2 Jn 5; see comments 1 Co 13). It is our active love toward one another that determines our sonship.

3:12 Cain's actions were the opposite of the love God desires that Christians manifest toward one another (Gn 4:1-17). ***His own works were evil:*** Reference here is to his offering of a sacrifice that was of the fruits of the field. The offering of this sacrifice was contrary to the will of God (Hb 11:4). God desired a blood sacrifice, but Cain sought to offer that which pleased him and not God. As a result, his works were considered evil because they were not according to the

commandments of God (See comments Mt 7:22,23; Mk 7:1-9). When God's displeasure was manifested toward Cain, that which was always in Cain's heart came to the surface, and thus, he murdered his brother. John's illustration of Cain manifests the nature of the heart of those who went out from the fellowship of the Christians (1:8). These revelations of John, therefore, are concentrating on one's heart. Keeping the commandments of God is only the manifestation of what is in the heart. If one does not keep the commandments of God in reference to his service to God, then he is creating a religion after his own desires. And if one desires to create a religion after his own desires, then he is evil according to John's definition of disobedience.

3:13 *Do not marvel:* Christians should not think that it is strange that the world would hate them. If they do think it strange, then they never really understood the nature of the life they accepted and what their fellowship with God would mean while living the Christian life (See Jn 15:17-19; 16:1ff; 17:14; Js 1:13; 1 Pt 4:12,13; see comments At 14:22; 2 Tm 3:12). The world is defined as the world because it walks in rebellion against God. Those who would submit to the will of God, therefore, are not of the world. The world thus persecutes them because the world walks after the will of the devil.

3:14 *We know:* John affirms that a Christian can know that he is saved. The evidence of his salvation is his behavioral relationship he maintains with his brother and the commandments of God

(Jn 13:34,35). As the world identifies the Christian to be of God by his life-style, John affirms that the same life-style is evidence of one's sonship. Persecution that comes from the world, therefore, is evidence of one's behavioral relationship with God (2:9-11). **From death to life:** The evidence that one has passed out of the unregenerate life of sin (Ep 1:1-5; Cl 2:13; see Jn 5:24) and into the eternal life in Christ (5:11,12), is the loving relationship one maintains with his brother in Christ.

3:15 Whoever hates: This is the one who "does not love" in verse 14. If one does not love his brother, then he is hating his brother (Compare Mt 5:22-30; Jn 8:44; Gl 5:21). This is the brother who manifests a disposition of murder in reference to the care of his brother. His lack of love will discourage his brother. If one's behavior in reference to his brother leads to his brother's discouragement, then he is not walking in love (See comments Rm 14; 1 Co 8). Christians must walk in love in their relationships with one another in order not to speak or act in a manner that they would discourage one another. Christianity is relational. Its relational nature is defined by the love disciples have for one another. The relationships that Christians have with one another, therefore, must be participatory. Christians must participate in one another's lives in order to encourage love and good works (Compare comments Hb 10:24,25).

3:16 By this we know love: We must not define love after the definitions of the world. We must define love after the

manner by which Jesus loved us (Jn 13:34,35). The extent to which He loved is manifested in the action of His incarnation and death for our sins (See 4:8-11; Jn 3:16; 5:12,13; 10:11,17,18; Rm 5:8; compare Mk 10:45; Gl 4:1; Ti 2:14; Hb 10:8-10). Our love for one another, therefore, must be manifested in our interpersonal activity in one another's lives.

3:17 Whoever has this world's goods: When one comes into the community of God, he accepts the responsibility of helping those in that community to maintain those things that are necessary for sustenance of life (See comments At 2:44,45; 4:32-37). However, those who come into the fellowship of the saints are to assume their personal responsibility to care for themselves (See comments 2 Th 3:6-15). Those who are lazy have no right to live off the labors of other disciples. Paul's remedy for laziness among Christians is, "If anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat" (2 Th 3:10). Those who have the world's goods are obligated to help unfortunate brethren to maintain life until they can get started again in life (1 Tm 6:17; see Gl 6:10). However, the church is not a welfare organization for those who refuse to work. The command of this verse is to every Christian. Every Christian, therefore, must work to have means to provide for his own sustenance, as well as, to give to the poor (At 20:35).

ASSURANCE

3:18,19 Love ... in deed and in truth: James defined true faith as a faith that works (Js 2:14-26). John here defines

true love as a love that works (See comments Gl 5:6). There is no such thing as an unexpressed love for God or one's brother (See Ez 33:31). Faith and love respond to the needs that arise out of one's environment. **By this we will know:** Those who love their brothers in deed and truth can be assured of their salvation (See 4:7,12). They can know that they are saved because they behave after the example of Jesus. It is not that we are saved by performance of good deeds in reference to our brothers. Good deeds do not atone for sin. Nevertheless, Christians have been created by the blood of Jesus for good works (Ep 2:10). Our good works in relation to our brother our our response to God's good work toward us through the cross (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15; see Hb 10:24,25). If there are no good works, therefore, there is no thanksgiving for what God has done for us through the cross (See comments Mt 18:22-35).

3:20 Greater than our heart: If those who have trained their consciences by the word of God feel guilty when they do not do that which is right, then they know that they are condemned by God who knows our consciences (See comments Js 4:17). The Christian who is guided by the word of God must be aware of the fact that if he does not walk according to his Bible-trained conscience, his guilty conscience indicates that he is not right with God. He must assume that God knows his guilty conscience and expects him to bring his life into harmony with his conscience.

3:21 We have confidence toward God: There is a difference between con-

scientiously sinning against God and sinning out of ignorance. God's grace is extended toward those who occasionally stumble because of weakness as they try to live according to the will of God. However, if we willfully sin, there remains no forgiveness (Hb 10:26). If our Bible-trained conscience does not afflict us, then we can have boldness before God (2:28). Our boldness is not based on supposed perfect performance of God's law but on his grace (See comments Ep 2:8,9).

3:22 Because we keep His commandments: John gives the condition for answered prayer. Answered prayer is conditioned on (1) keeping God's commandments (Jn 8:29) and (2) doing the things that are pleasing to God (See Ps 34:15; Pv 15:29; Jr 29:12; Mt 7:8; Jn 8:29; Hb 13:21). In the context of his exhortation to Christians, John reassures the obedient that their prayers are answered. The disobedient do not have this assurance. When one lives an obedient life, however, he can know that God is working in answer to his prayers. We would assume, therefore, that God does not answer the prayers of those who willingly live a rebellious life against His will.

3:23 This is His commandment: The word "commandment" is singular, though the commandment contains two inseparable conditions. (1) We must actively believe in Jesus (Jn 6:29). (2) We must actively express our love of our brothers because we believe in Jesus (Mt 22:39; Jn 13:34; Ep 5:2). In other words, one cannot believe on Jesus without actively expressing his love for his brother (4:7-21).

3:24 See Jn 14:23; 15:1ff. Being in Christ is conditioned on one's obedient response to the grace of God (Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 12:13; Gl 3:26,27). **By the Spirit:** This is the same phrase and meaning as "out of God" (*ek tou Theou*) in 2:9. Reference is to source and origin from the Spirit. Therefore, as in 4:13, John uses the presence of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit that John's readers possessed as an empirical evidence of the presence of the Spirit among them (See comments At 2:38,39; 8:18; Gl 3:1-4). The lack of the Spirit among the apostate teachers was evidence that they were not from God. They did not originate from God because they did not have the Spirit of God. Keep in mind also, that the apostate teachers who went out from the Christian community could have

manifested to some degree the fruit of the Spirit. However, they could never have exercised the miraculous gifts of the Spirit through inspired teaching. For this reason, John uses the presence of the miraculous gifts among the faithful as evidence that the faithful were from God. Since the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit has passed away today, the evidence of God's abiding presence in one's life is manifested in the spirit of obedience one maintains toward the will of God (2:24; Jn 14:23). It is easy to determine if one is of God today simply because of the judgment of the word of God. If one refuses to follow the word of God that came to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, then truly that person is not of God.

CHAPTER 4

FALSE TEACHERS

4:1 3:24 introduces the thoughts of this verse. Both passages deal with the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, both in inspiration of the early prophets and in the testing of those who claimed to be inspired. **Test the spirits:** The word "spirits" is here used to refer to the attitude or disposition of those who have not submitted to the truth (2:18,22,26; 4:5; see 1 Co 4:21; Gl 6:1; 2 Th 2:2). John here identifies them as false teachers, that is, false in their twisting of the truth (Mt 7:15ff; 24:5,11; compare Jr 29:8; Mt 24:4). John's definition of "false prophets" helps us understand that these are those who are denying fundamental truths. The term is not used in the New

Testament to refer to someone with whom we may disagree on a matter of opinion. In the historical context of John's readers, the 1st century Christians, through the miraculous gift of discerning of spirits, could determine whether one was teaching the truth. They could do so by exercising the gift of discerning spirits (1 Co 12:4-11; 14:29; 1 Th 5:21; Rv 2:2). This miraculous gift was necessary in the 1st century because the word of God had not been written by which teachings of men could be compared with the word of God. Since the miraculous gift of discerning of spirits does not exist today, Christians have the means by which to discern whether one is speaking the truth. They can do so by compar-

ing what is said with what has already been revealed through the New Testament (See Jr 29:8; 2 Jn 10,11). Since God has revealed truth to man, He expects His people to judge what a man says by the truth that has already been revealed in the written word of God. If one affirms to have the Spirit, but does not speak according to the truth of the Bible, then he does not have the Spirit. Those who have little or no knowledge of the word of God, therefore, cannot test the spirits because they are ignorant of the standard by which all teachers must be proved. **Many false prophets:** As in the days of John, so it is today. There are many who have gone out into the world with religions that have been constructed after the traditions or presumptions of those who claim to have spoken to God (Mt 24:5; At 20:30; 1 Tm 4:1; 2 Pt 2:1). They presume to be teachers on behalf of Jesus, but they are false teachers because they are distorting the word of Jesus. They thus lead men astray after their own presumptions. The validation of their existence as teachers, therefore, does not rest on the word of God, but on their own feelings or traditions.

4:2 Jesus Christ has come in the flesh: This is the fundamental confession that must be made by those who would be proved to be from God. In this epistle, John argues against those false teachers who did not believe in the incarnation (See Jn 1:1,14). His readers could determine if one was teaching the truth by determining if the teacher believed the incarnation of the Son of God (See comments Ph 2:6-8; 2 Jn 7; com-

pare 1 Co 12:3). Those who did not make such a confession were antichrists (2 Jn 7; 2 Th 2:7). The Cerinthian Gnostics affirmed that "the Christ" was deity who had descended upon the man Jesus. The Christ, therefore, was not incarnate. The Docetic Gnostics affirmed that Jesus was an apparition of the mind. As Deity, it was supposed by the Docetics that He only appeared to come in the flesh. John thus argues against both sects of Gnostics by affirming that Jesus Christ did come in the flesh. Those who would confess such are of God.

4:3 Not from God: Those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh have denied a fundamental doctrine. They are thus not of God because they have not believed a fundamental doctrine concerning the nature and work of God through Jesus Christ. In the historical context of the letter, those Jews who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah were against Jesus. They were thus manifested to be not of God because they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. They were still looking for another messiah to be born into Israel. **Antichrist ... is already in the world:** All who would not confess that Jesus originated from God as the Christ have identified themselves as antichrists (2:18-23). The apostles had preached the coming of those who would deny the incarnation. John's readers had heard this message from John's former teaching, and from the inspired message of their prophets (Compare 2 Th 2:7). They heard this message from the teachings of Jesus (Mt 24:11,23,24). At the time John wrote

these words, the antichrists were in the world and influencing the disciples. This should forever silence those who affirm that there is a specific person known as the antichrist who is yet to come in the future. The antichrists had already come by the time John wrote. In the historical context of this letter, reference would be to those Jewish Christians who began to believe that Jesus was not the Messiah, but only a good teacher of Israel. In the heat of Rome's conflict with rebellious Jews, there were many "messiahs" who arose in order to muster the Jews in rebellion against Rome. It may have been that some of the early Jewish Christians began to question the messiahship of Jesus, and thus join in the insurrection against Rome. They were thus working among the disciples in order to recruit others for rebellion.

4:4 *You are from God:* John reassured his readers that they were born of God because they accepted Jesus as the Messiah. They were of God because they affirmed the fundamental teaching that the Christ had come in the flesh as the Messiah (5:4). They were born of God through their obedience to the gospel of Jesus' death for our sins and resurrection for our hope (2:29; 3:1,9; 5:4,19; Jn 3:3-5; 1 Pt 1:23). ***Have overcome them:*** They had overcome through their knowledge of and obedience to the truth of who Jesus was (2:13,14; 5:4,5). ***He who is in you:*** God was dwelling in them because of their submission to the will of God (Ep 3:16,17; compare 2 Tm 1:7; see comments 3:24). The deity that dwelt in them was greater than Satan who was in the

world (Jn 12:31; Ep 2:2). The Christian world view is not dualistic. The Bible does not teach the belief that both God and Satan are equal and opposing powers in the universe. All that exists originated from God, including Satan (See Cl 1:16). Satan had a beginning. He will have an ending (Mt 25:41). However, God is eternal and self-sufficient in His existence. All that exists depends upon His power (Hb 1:3). Nothing is eternal outside His presence (See comments 2 Th 1:6-9).

4:5 *They are from the world:* The false teachers are of the unregenerate world because their theology originates from the minds of men (Compare Jn 3:31). Since their thinking originates from the minds of the world, then the world accepts what they say (Jn 15:19). The fact that the world listens to those theologies that are generated out of worldly thinking, identifies such theologies as originating from the world (See Jn 8:44; 15:19; 2 Tm 4:1-4). Christians would do well to caution themselves about teaching those things that please the ears of those who are worldly in their thinking.

4:6 In contrast to what John said in verse 5, those who hear the revealed truth of the apostles and prophets are identified to be born out of God. Their disposition to willingly hear truth identifies them as those who seek truth, and thus, seek God (Jn 8:47; At 17:11; 2 Tm 2:15). ***The spirit of truth:*** This is the disposition to listen to the truth. When one is seeking truth, he will find it (See comments At 18:9,10). However, if one is

not seeking to find truth, he will never discover it. **The spirit of error:** This is the disposition of listening to those theologies that originate from the minds of men (Compare Is 8:20). Those who would listen to the religious inventions of men will reject the truth of God because they seek to establish religion upon the foundation of their own traditions or emotions (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). When men do such, they are not seeking God's direction. They are seeking to be the authority of their own religious beliefs and behavior. Through man-made religions, men deceive themselves.

Practice of Fellowship

(4:7 – 5:5)

Outline: (1) The loving nature of God (4:7-16), (2) Love and assurance (4:17 – 5:5)

THE LOVING NATURE OF GOD

4:7,8 Let us love one another: This is another test of discipleship. If one maintains a behavioral character of actively loving his brother, then John says that he is born from God (3:9-18; 4:20; Mt 22:37-40; Mk 12:29,30; Jn 13:34,35; 15:9-23; Gl 5:6; see 1 Th 4:9). **Knows God:** The more one applies the principles of God's attributes, the more one understands the nature of God. The problem with idolatry is that one seeks to form a god after one's own attributes. The idolater defines his god according to how he feels. As a result, the concept one has of God is limited to the extent of one's own ability to love. It is for this reason that all man-made religions have different concepts of God than those who believe

and obey the truth. **Does not know God:** The tense of this verb is aorist, which expresses a onetime happening in the past. John's point is that the unloving individual has never known the nature of God because he has always been unloving. He has thus never been converted. Because he was not converted, he went out from the fellowship of the disciples because he never knew God in the first place (2:19). John's point is that we can never come to understand who God is if we do not express love toward one another after the nature of God who is love (See 2:4). When people fall away from the community of believers, therefore, they are the ones who have never learned to love God's people as He loved them. The fellowship among disciples, therefore, must exemplify our understanding of God. If disciples are not interactive with one another, they can never understand the God of love. The true church of Christ, therefore, is defined by those members who participate in one another's lives. **God is love:** John describes the nature of God as spirit (Jn 4:24; see Jn 14:6; Hb 12:29), light (1:5), and now, love. As spirit, God can only be manifested to man after the image of spiritual attributes. Therefore, we understand who God is by His actions of love that He has manifested to men through Jesus. Specifically, we understand God through His work of love on the cross (Jn 3:16; Rm 5:8). No physical image can ever manifest the nature of spirit. Therefore, God could manifest Himself through a physical image as he did to Moses, but we must not define God after

the nature of any physical manifestation. God was manifested through Jesus on earth. However, we must keep in mind that through this incarnate (physical) manifestation, the totality of God was not manifested. The totality of God was not manifested through Jesus because Jesus had emptied Himself of the “form of God” when He came to this world (See comments Ph 2:6-8).

4:9 Love is not known unless it is manifested in action. Though the loving kindness of God was manifested through His patient work with the nation of Israel, the climax of the manifestation of His love toward man was in the action of the cross (4:19; Rm 5:8). **Only begotten Son:** Jesus was the *monogenes* of God, that is, the only Son who ever came forth from God (See comments Jn 1:14,18; 3:16). He was not one of a series of sons. He was the only Son. This same Greek word (*monogenes*) is also used in reference to the uniqueness of the firstborn child of a family (See Lk 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; Hb 11:17). In this context, John wants us to understand that Jesus stands alone as the only begotten Son who had a unique relationship with the Father because He was of and from the Father (5:10; Jn 1:14,18; 3:16). If one does not accept Jesus as the only revelation from God, then he is antichrist. Any faith, therefore, that does not accept Jesus as the only begotten Son of God cannot be from God. **Live through Him:** Through Jesus only is their life (5:10,11; Jn 14:6). There is no other mediator between God and man (At 4:12).

4:10 *But that He loved us:* Herein

is the definition of the *agape* (love) about which John is speaking concerning God's actions toward man in relation to salvation (See comments Rm 5:8; see Ti 3:4,5). It was not that man was righteous, and thus, deserved the righteous act of God through the sacrifice of the cross. God loved man in his state of being unlovable (Jn 15:16; Rm 5:8). The *agape* (love) of God, therefore, was given without conditions. It was unearned love. In this context, therefore, Jesus is the example of the love about which John is speaking. It is this nature of love that must be exercised in the brotherhood of believers. **Atoning sacrifice for our sins:** The word “propitiation” is used only here and in 2:2, Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 2:17. Through the cross, we were released from the guilt of sin, and thus, freed from the punishment that was due because of sin. The thought is expiation. We were freed from the judgment of God that we deserved as a result of our sin. Law demands punishment. Mercy sets aside the deserved punishment in order to give freedom. Through the propitiation of the cross, mercy was extended and freedom was given from punishment that law demanded (Ep 2:1-10).

4:11 *We ought also to love:* John applies to the Christian the example of God's love toward man. God has given His love in order to deliver us from our problem of sin. The extent of His love was the incarnation and cross (3:1; Mt 18:33; Jn 3:16; Rm 8:32). Therefore, when we realize how far God had to come through the incarnation and cross to save us, we should be moved to extend the

same love toward others (vs 19; see comments Mt 18:22-35). Christianity, therefore, is based on positive responses to the loving act of God. It is based on the responses that naturally come from a heart of gratitude for what God has done in order to bring men into eternal dwelling with Him (See comments 2 Co 4:15). This letter of John deals with the fundamental belief of the incarnation of God in order to bring about the plan of redemption. Therefore, any denial of the incarnation is an apostasy from the truth of the gospel. If the incarnation were not complete, and God only appeared through an apparition or spirit to man, then the sacrifice is incomplete. The sacrifice of the cross means nothing if there were truly no incarnation of God in order to be offered as the propitiation for the sins of men.

4:12 *No one has seen God:* The word "God" is in the text here without the article. John's point is that no one has ever seen the divine nature (Jn 1:18; 1 Tm 6:16). John affirms that no one has ever seen all that God is. This is true since physical eyes are limited to seeing only that which is physical. God is spirit. He cannot be seen by that which is physical. We can only see the attributes of God as they are manifested through Jesus (Jn 14:9) and His loving actions toward man. Therefore, through obedient love we see God (3:6). ***If we love one another:*** If Christians love one another, then God indwells them (2:28). God's love is thus perfected in us in the sense that the divine plan of community is made complete through those who maintain the

attributes of the One who died for them (See comments Jn 13:34,35). Our loving of one another, and loving God through the keeping of His commandments, completes God's love that was revealed through Jesus in order to redeem us (2:5; 4:16,17).

4:13 *By this we know:* "We" probably refers to the apostles as is explained in verse 14. It was the apostles who had personally seen and walked with Jesus (1:1,2; Jn 14:20). The giving of the Holy Spirit to the apostles was miraculous (2:1-4). John uses this miraculous giving of the Spirit, and the apostles' personal witness of Jesus, as empirical evidence of their testimony that they are of God (3:24; Mk 16:17-20; Gl 3:5; Hb 2:3,4). We know that we are of God when we do that which was revealed through the apostles who gave their witness that Jesus was the Son of God (1:3). ***Given to us from His Spirit:*** The Greek phrase "from His Spirit" is from *ek tou pneumatos* which would literally be translated "out of His Spirit." Emphasis is on the origin of the miraculous that John and the apostles possessed. Therefore, in this context John does not emphasize the receiving of the Spirit, but what the Spirit gave. And what the Spirit gave was the power to unleash the evidential power of God in order to prove that they were from God (See comments Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). From the Holy Spirit came the evidence, that John here affirms, is proof of their being of God (See comments At 2:38,39; 8:18; Rm 1:11; see 1 Jn 3:24; 1 Co 12:8-11).

4:14,15 *We have seen:* It was the

apostles who were the special witnesses to the Son of God and His resurrection (1:1,2; Lk 24:48; Jn 1:14; 15:26,27; At 1:8). They had been with Jesus during His ministry. They had witnessed Him after His resurrection (1:3). They gave their testimony that Jesus was the Messiah who had come in the flesh. **Whoever confesses:** John is not talking about a simple verbal confession that one believes in Jesus. The confession here is the behavioral proclamation of one's life that Jesus is the Son of God, and thus, the Lord of one's life (2:23). When one recognizes that Jesus is the Son of God, he is moved to make Jesus the Lord of His life (See comments At 2:36,37; compare Mt 10:32,33; Jn 12:42). When one accepts Jesus as the Christ and Son of God, his acceptance must be more than a verbal proclamation. His acceptance of Jesus as his Lord must be a change in his behavior. **God dwells in him:** God abides in the one whose life is given over to following after God. John here defines the indwelling of Deity. Indwelling (abiding) of God within one is conditioned on the obedient life. When one's life conforms to the will of God, then God dwells in that person insofar as his life is guided by the commandments of God.

4:16 He who dwells in love dwells in God: John is here specific concerning the condition upon which God's indwelling is based. When our lives conform to the loving nature of God (vs 8), then God dwells in us (3:24). By following after a life-style of love, one begins to understand the nature of God (Jn 17:25,26). The definition of the indwell-

ing of God is the obedient love in one's life to the commandments of God.

LOVE AND ASSURANCE

4:17 Boldness in the day of judgment: When we are living a life of obedient love, then God's love is perfected (completed) in us in that we are the extension of His loving action toward all men (See vs 18; 2:5). Since our obedience is the "perfection" of the love of God, then we can have confidence in judgment because we know that we are responding to the love of God in being His representatives to the world. Our boldness is not in our works after a meritorious manner. Our boldness is in the fact that we have responded to God's grace, and thus, have completed His plan to save us because of our response to the gospel (See comments 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). In this we have assurance and not fear in reference to the final judgment (2:28; 3:21). **So also are we in this world:** Every Christian is the extension of Jesus in the world. As we imitate Jesus, we are thus His means through which the gospel is preached to all the world (3:3; 1 Pt 2:21).

4:18 Perfect love casts out fear: The fear about which John speaks in this context is not the reverential fear by which Christians have a deep respect for God (2 Co 7:1; Ep 5:21; Ph 2:12; 1 Pt 1:17). In this context, John speaks of the fear of a vengeful master who seeks to punish with a whip. Those who lovingly obey God do not fear Him as an angry God who seeks to punish (See vs 12; 3:19-21). Those who have responded to

the loving grace of God, see God as a loving Father who seeks to save the obedient. Therefore, those who continue to complete God's love through their loving response need not fear the punishment that God has reserved for the disobedient. Obedient love casts out fear of retribution from God (See comments Rm 8:37-39).

4:19 If one's knowledge of God's love offering of Jesus on the cross does not stimulate a loving response to God, then one's heart is hardened (See Jn 3:16; 13:34; 15:12,13; 2 Co 4:15; Ep 2:4-9; 5:2). It is not a heart that is fit for eternal dwelling. Because God has first loved, we love in response (Rm 5:8). Because He had mercy on us, we have mercy toward others (Js 2:13). The nature of the hearts that are fit for eternal dwelling is merciful because of love.

4:20 The love about which John speaks is a love that acts. There is no

such thing as an inactive love in one's relationship with God. If the love by which God has loved us does not stimulate love of one's brother, then one cannot say that he loves God. John speaks of a love that is not written on paper. It is a love that is carried out in the behavior of individuals who have been sparked into life by the love of God.

4:21 *This commandment:* The commandment we have received refers to responsive love (See Mt 22:37-40; Mk 12:29-31; Lk 10:27; Jn 13:34,35; 15:13). This is the test of discipleship. One cannot claim to love God without loving his brother. Loving one's brother refers to brotherhood in the community of God. Christians not only watch out for one another, they take care of one another. One cannot say that he loves God and at the same time forsake his duties to the community of his brothers and sisters in Christ (See comments Hb 10:24,25).

CHAPTER 5

The thoughts of verse 21 of chapter 4 introduce us to the comments of this chapter. The one who is our brother is defined in verses 1,2 of this chapter.

5:1 *Whoever believes:* This is not a simple belief and verbal confession that Jesus is the Son of God. John has more in mind. Reference is to an active faith that responds to the grace of God (Jn 1:12; 3:16; see comments 2 Co 4:15; Js 2:14-26). One is thus born of God when he carries his faith into action by obeying the commandments of God (Jn 14:15; see comments Mk 16:16; Rm 6:3-6). He is born of God when he carries his love into

action to take care of his brother. ***Loves him who is born of Him:*** Those who actively love God in response to God's love for us (4:19), will also love those who have also been obedient to the gospel (4:2). All those who have obeyed the gospel, therefore, are in fellowship with one another (1:3). Our fellowship is the blessing of our common obedience to the one Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, fellowship is not something that we choose to establish. It is the result of God's bringing all believers into the one organic body of Christ through obedience to the one gospel (See Rm 6:3-6; see comments Rm 14).

5:2 John here gives two tests of how we might determine that we are children of God (2:29; 4:7). (1) We must love God by responding to His love. (2) We must keep God's commandments as a response to His love (Jn 14:15; 15:14). These two conditions for sonship cannot be separated because it is our love that moves us into action. Our action must be directed and defined by the commandments of God. Those who invent for themselves religions after their own imaginations cannot say that they love God (See Mt 7:21-23). They love their traditions in their misguided religiosity. If one is in love with his religious traditions, he will not seek the commandments of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). If one is guided by his emotional hysteria in colorful religious assemblies, he will love his own feelings more than the word of God. All religions, therefore, that are focused on the authority of man, either in tradition or emotions, are false for they seek the authority of man instead of the authority of God. John's argument in this verse is that Christians can know that they are children of God when they respond to the word of God. Their thoughts and behavior are controlled and subservient to the word of God.

5:3 *This is the love of God:* The love of God is defined by John as keeping His commandments (See 2:5; Jn 14:15; Gl 5:6; 2 Jn 6). Therefore, in reference to loving God, there is no other love than a love that is expressed by obedience to the word of God. If one is ignorant of the commandments, therefore, he can never know if he truly loves God.

John is saying here that we cannot invent for ourselves our own love-response to God, and thus, claim that we love God. In order to love God according to John's definition that he has given here, one must know the commandments of God. One cannot claim to love God if he establishes authority in his religious beliefs by either human religious traditions or misguided emotional outbursts. True love of God drives one to the word of God. Therefore, those who are ignorant of the word of God cannot be assured that their love of God is according to His commandments. ***Commandments are not burdensome:*** God's laws are not distressing or grievous to those who are truly motivated by His saving grace (2 Co 4:15). It is a pleasure for those who love God to do His will (Mc 6:8; Mt 11:30; 23:4). It is a pleasure to serve God because one works in thanksgiving and not meritoriously (2 Co 4:15). Those who consider it a burden to do the will of God are not yet made perfect in love.

5:4,5 *Born from God:* Christians have been brought forth (born) from God by their response to the grace of God. They have obeyed the gospel, and thus, have been born of the water and the Spirit (Jn 3:3-5; 16:33; Rm 6:3-6,17; 2 Th 2:14; 1 Pt 1:23). ***This is the victory ... our faith:*** Our faith is our victory insofar as we are moved to respond to the will of God (Js 2:14-26). A dead faith has no victory (See comments Hb 11). Those who have obeyed the gospel have overcome the mentality and behavior of the world (2:15; see Jn 16:33). *"But in all these things we are more than conquer-*

ors through Him who loved us” (Rm 8:37). **Our faith:** As active faith gave the Old Testament patriarchs victory, so it will give us victory over the world (See comments Hb 11). In this context, John places the means by which victory is acquired (faith) in place of the victory. In other words, our faith is that which makes it possible for us to overcome the world. We are able to overcome the temptations and false teachings of the world by putting our trust in God. **He who believes:** When we truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we are moved to actively put our trust in Him. Our life, therefore, is guided by the will of God, and thus, we overcome the temptations and false teachings of the world by our obedient response to His will and word (Jn 16:33; see Rm 8:37; 1 Co 15:57). The one who believes is the one who is living the life of the disciple. His belief is not simply in word, but in deed and love. It is for this reason that the disciples of Jesus can be identified by their obedient behavior of the Son of God.

Privileges of Fellowship

(5:6-21)

Outline: (1) Victory through Jesus (5:6-12), (2) Partners in eternal life (5:13-17), (3) Assurance (5:18-21)

VICTORY THROUGH JESUS

5:6 John here emphasizes the witness of Jesus through His humanity and deity. He argues against theologies that would later be promoted by both the Cerinthian and Docetic Gnostics. **By water and blood:** By His baptism, Jesus

witnessed to all men that He was truly human in that He submitted to the will of God as God's Son (Mt 3:15; Hb 5:9). By His death on the cross, He gave witness to the offering of His physical body for the redemption of our sins (Jn 19:34). Therefore, the truly incarnate Son of God experienced through the immersion of His physical body and His physical death on the cross, the humanity of those He had created. **The Spirit who bears witness:** The Holy Spirit also gave witness to Jesus. He gave witness not only during the life of Jesus but also by having the events and teachings of His earthly ministry recorded for all men (Jn 16:13; 2 Tm 3:16,17). **The Spirit is the truth:** The Holy Spirit can be nothing other than truth. He can reveal only that which is true (See 4:6; Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

5:7,8 The section that begins with “in heaven” in verse 7 and concludes with “in earth” in verse 8 in the *King James Version* is not found in any Greek manuscripts that precede the 16th century. Therefore, this statement has been deleted by several recent translations. Nevertheless, the statements of this variant reading agree with the nature of John's argument that the testimony of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in confirmation of Jesus as the Son of God. The Holy Spirit gave testimony to Jesus at the time of His baptism by descending on Him in the likeness of a dove (Mt 3:16; Jn 1:32-34). He also gave witness by inspiring the New Testament writers to record the events of His life and His teachings (Jn 14:26; 16:13; 2 Tm 3:16,17). The Father gave witness of His

Son through miraculous works (Jn 3:2; Hb 2:3,4). Jesus also gave witness to Himself by His obedience to the will of the Father. The three witnesses to Jesus (the Spirit, water and blood) continue to testify to the humanity and deity of Jesus. Through the Spirit-inspired word of God, the Holy Spirit continues to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gl 5:22). The word of God continues to give testimony to the incarnation of Jesus (Jn 1:1,14; 6:51; 20:30,31; Cl 1:22; 1 Pt 4:1). Immersion in water for remission of sins in obedience to the gospel continues to testify to the fact that people respond to Jesus as the Son of God (Rm 6:3-6). Every witness that is made of the incarnation and sonship of Jesus agree as one.

5:9 Because we have responded to the gospel by faith in Jesus, we have affirmed that we have accepted the testimony of the apostles who experienced Jesus in the flesh (1:1-3; Lk 24:48). **The witness of God is greater:** God's witness is greater because His witness comes from the supernatural realm of His existence. It is thus miraculous and above any witness that men could give (See Mt 8:16; Mk 16:20; Jn 10:38; 20:30,31; Hb 2:3,4).

5:10 The witness in himself: In the immediate context of John's readers, they had the witness of the miraculous work of the Spirit in their lives (See 2:27; 3:24; Rm 8:16; see comments 1 Co 12). In a general sense, however, the response of men to the grace of God is a witness to the fact that Jesus and His life inspire the abundant life (4:19; see 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). When one believes the inspired

witness of Jesus that is recorded in the New Testament, he is moved by faith to change his life (See Rm 10:17; 12:1,2). However, if one refuses to believe any witness of God, then his disobedient response to God's testimony proclaims God to be a liar. It proclaims God to be a liar because God has spoken the truth through Jesus as His Son. Those who do not believe the Son, therefore, are saying that the Son is not of God. They thus proclaim God to be a liar.

5:11 God has given to us eternal life: The Christian is in the realm of eternal existence since he has come into contact with the cleansing blood of Jesus that produces life (1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:13,20). He partakes of eternal life by enjoying all that God would offer concerning both life in this world (Jn 10:10) and life in the world that is to come (vs 13; Jn 5:24; 6:45; 17:3). However, while the Christian is partaking of eternal life while dwelling in the physical realm of this world, his life is conditioned on continually walking in the light (1:6-9). We must keep in mind that enjoying the abundant life in this world does not mean that this life is all that God has to offer. The fullness of the life that God has to offer the obedient will be realized only when the Son of God is revealed from heaven in order to transition us into the next realm of existence (2:25; Mk 10:29,30; 2 Co 5:1-8; Ti 1:2). **In His Son:** It is important to notice that eternal life does not lie outside the realm of a covenant relationship with Jesus. One must come into Christ in order to enjoy the benefits that result from the cleansing blood of Jesus.

One comes into Christ through the waters of baptism (Gl 3:27; see Rm 6:3-5; 2 Tm 2:10).

5:12 The condition for having the Son is in an obedient response to the grace of God (Jn 3:36). Jesus is the only source of salvation and life (Jn 8:32; 14:6; At 4:12). There is no other means by which men can be saved other than approaching God through Jesus. If one could be saved on the basis of good deeds, then there would have been no need for the sacrificial offering of the cross. If one could have been saved through law-keeping, then there would have been no need for grace (See comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). Salvation, therefore, is dependent on one's response to the will of God in obedience to the gospel.

PARTNERS IN ETERNAL LIFE

5:13 *That you may know that you have eternal life:* Through John's record of the life and ministry of Jesus, John wrote in order that we believe that Jesus is the Christ (Jn 20:30,31). This epistle of 1 John is written to those who have believed. It is written to give assurance to the believers that they understand that they have eternal life in Christ (See vss 11,12,14; 2:25; 4:12). He writes also that they continue in the obedient life in order to maintain their eternal life while they dwell in this physical realm.

14,15 *If we ask:* In this letter, John has given two conditions upon which prayer is answered. (1) We must ask according to the will of God, for God does not work contrary to His will in answer

to prayer (2:28; 3:21,22). (2) We must ask upon the condition that we are obedient to His will, for God works through the lives of those who are carrying out His work in the world (3:22; see Mk 11:24; Jn 14:13; 15:7; 16:23-26; Ph 2:12,13). If we ask of God on these two conditions, John affirms that we can have confidence, or boldness that God will answer our prayers (See 2:28; 4:17). We can have confidence that God will work on our behalf in order to accomplish that which is in the best interests of His children (Rm 8:28; see Mt 7:7-11). ***We have the petitions:*** When we are confident that God hears our prayers, then we will see His answers (See comments Mk 11:24).

5:16 In these statements we must keep in mind that John was writing to those who were faithful. He was writing concerning their responsibility to those who were apostate from the fundamental truths concerning the nature of who Jesus was (Compare Gl 6:1). ***Sees his brother:*** The sin about which John here writes is sin that can be seen. The inward beliefs of the sinning brother were being carried out in his life. We must keep in mind that the prayer of the faithful brother benefits only insofar as the one for whom prayer is made comes to repentance. God will not bless the brother who persists in a life of sin. ***Not leading to death:*** In the first part of this verse, John talks about those Christians who would commit acts of sin in times of weakness. Their recognition of such sin is enough to stimulate their repentance. However, in the last part of the

verse he speaks of those who fall away from the truth, and thus lead a life of sin (Hb 6:4-6; 2 Pt 2:20-22). This is the one who has denied the incarnation, and thus, given up the foundation on which our faith stands. **Sin unto death:** The one who gives up the fundamental doctrine of the incarnation is the one who has forsaken the foundation of Christianity. Though this person may retain a religious life, he has denied the foundation of his relationship with God, and thus, he is not walking in the light (1:1-9). This one will not repent of his sin because he has deceived himself into believing that he is religiously right. When one thinks that he is religiously right while being doctrinally wrong, he will fail to see the need for repentance. He will thus carry on in his religious self-deception (Compare comments Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9; 2 Th 2:10-12). **I do not say that he should pray for this:** John does not command the faithful to pray for the brother who carries on in his religious deception because he has given up the fundamental truths concerning the incarnate Christ. John here releases the faithful from their obligation to pray for those who have fallen away from the truth of the incarnation of Jesus (Compare Mt 12:31; Mk 3:29; Hb 6:4-6; 10:26,27; 2 Pt 2:20-22).

5:17 All unrighteousness is sin: Sin is here defined as a free-moral lack of response to the will of God (2:29; 3:4). When one does not do that which is right according to the will of God, he sins. John here refers us back to the unrepentant life of the apostate who has given up the foundation of his faith, that is, belief

in the incarnation of the Son of God. The result of this apostasy will lead to an unrighteous behavior that brings spiritual death. It is important, therefore, to maintain those fundamental beliefs that are the heart of Christianity (See comments Ep 4:4-6). It is upon the foundation of these beliefs that our world view is built. Our world view determines our values, and what we consider values determines our behavior. Therefore, it is important to believe in the fundamental truths that the New Testament reveals concerning the incarnation of Jesus.

ASSURANCE

5:18 We know: This is the result of the purpose for which John writes. The Christian can know that he is a son of God. He can know that he is saved. His assurance of his salvation is not based on either the merit of his good works or performance of law. He knows that all men sin and that he himself cannot lead the perfect life in reference to God's will (Rm 3:9,10,23). However, he can be assured of his salvation because of his faith in the grace of God that brings the continual cleansing of sin by the blood of Jesus (1:7-9). His confidence is not in arrogantly affirming that he has no sin. His confidence of salvation is in confessing his sin and trusting in the grace of God. His confidence is not in meritorious law-keeping or good works. His confidence is in the fact that it is through the grace of God that he is able to stand (See "Purpose" in intro. to Gl). **Does not sin:** The verb here is the Greek present tense of continuous action. Therefore, the one

born of God does not live a life of sin (3:9; see 3:6). If we are born of God, then we are doing righteousness (2:29; compare 1 Pt 1:23). The fact that we are born of God is that we have chosen to live after the will of God, and thus, we are not living a life of sin. **Keeps himself:** The one who has chosen to obey the gospel, has chosen to live according to the will of God (See comments Rm 6:17,18). Christians have the responsibility to guard themselves against apostasy (vs 21; Js 1:27; Jd 21). They must first recognize that they can fall away from the faith. In realizing that apostasy is possible, they must guard themselves against being led astray (See comments Ep 4:11-16). **The wicked one does not touch him:** The wicked one is Satan (3:8; 2 Co 4:4; Ep 2:2; 6:11; Cl 1:13). Satan cannot take away from God any who have determined to be the servants of righteousness (See comments Jn 10:28,29). Satan cannot of his own will take one away from God. One must voluntarily make a free-moral decision to fall away (See comments 1 Pt 5:8). It is for this reason that each person will give account of himself before God (2 Co 5:10).

5:19 We know: Again John reaffirms the confidence of the Christian. In his sincere efforts to be obedient to God, the Christian can have assurance that he is of God. **From God:** This statement literally means "out of God." In other words, the Christian can know that he originates from God because he is obedient to the God who was incarnate in the flesh of man (3:10; 4:6). The assurance of our salvation, therefore, is based

on our response to the incarnate Son of God. Jesus was the manifestation of the God of heaven who came into this world. We follow after Jesus, and thus, we have confidence that we are born out of God because Jesus came forth from God. **The whole world:** The entire world outside the Christian community lies in the deception of religious falsehood and worldly living. Satan has led worldly minded people astray from God by their desires to fulfill the lusts of the flesh (2:15). He has led the religious world astray by their desire to follow after their own inventions of religion.

5:20 We know that the Son of God is come: Herein is the foundation upon which our faith is built. Because of the testimony of the apostles (1:1,2) to the witness of God that Jesus was His Son (Jn 5:19ff), we are assured that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus has brought to us an understanding of who God is (Jn 17:3). If we deny that Jesus has come from God as the incarnate Son of God, then we will question the revelation that comes to us from the Son. But since the faithful have not given up their belief in the incarnate Son of God, they understand what is real in reference to the purpose of this world (Lk 24:45). They understand the purpose of life and the destiny of all things. Because we obediently believe, therefore, we establish our "in Christ" relationship with the Son of God. **Is come:** The Greek present tense in this verse has always troubled commentators. John was writing many years after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. According to the use of the present tense, John affirmed

that Jesus was still in the flesh of His resurrected body (See 2 Jn 7). One could conclude, therefore, that though Jesus' body was changed to a glorious body after His resurrection (Ph 3:21), there was a permanency about His incarnation that exemplifies His sacrificial offering. He was not incarnate in the flesh only for the time of His ministry and cross experience. He was incarnate forever. When He gave up being on equality with God, therefore, it was not for thirty-three years. It was for eternity (Ph 2:5-11). ***This is the true God:*** John concludes this letter with the affirmation that Jesus is one with God (Jn 17:3; Rv 3:7). It is not that Jesus was or is a separate personality from God. He is God. It is not that He is one of three gods. He is one with God. The eternal Godhead manifested Himself through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, He remains the one true God.

5:21 *Keep yourselves from idols:* The readers of John lived in an idolatrous culture. They would not be kept from idols by the Holy Spirit. They must assume this responsibility, as all Christians

who live in a world of sin. The Spirit does not directly subject us to His control. Christians must make every effort to guard themselves against the wiles of the devil (See comments Ep 6:10ff; see 1 Co 10:14). John's exhortation to stay away from idols must be considered in reference to the spirit of idolatry that is present in every man. We seek to create God after our own image. Some people carve the imagination of their god in a piece of wood or on a stone. Others simply carve a mental picture of a god they can understand and command. Whenever we formulate a concept of God whom we have manipulated to justify our behavior, we have become an idolater. It is God who seeks to mold us. It is not we who should mold Him. Therefore, John's warning to keep ourselves from idol gods is just as relevant today as it was before the ink dried on his original autograph. We must guard ourselves from creating a religion after our own desires lest we seek to please ourselves and not God.