

**17 ¶** You therefore, beloved, seeing you know *these things* before, beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

**18** But grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* glory both now and forever. Amen.

that they are hard to understand, but not impossible to understand. Peter was an inspired Christ-sent apostle. The Holy Spirit did not inspire him to understand these statements by Paul. It was the work of the Holy Spirit to inspire the material to be written. It was not His work to inspire men to understand what was (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). Our difficulty in understanding is often the result of our lack of study. It may also be our carnal thinking (1 Co 3:1,2). Whatever the case, God did not reveal those things that are fundamental to our salvation in a manner that is difficult to understand. It is only when revelation is made of those things that are beyond the experience of our lives that we have difficulty in understanding. It is then that we must trust in God who has all things in control. **Untaught:** These are ignorant of the word of God. They do not have a spirit to study or be taught, and thus, twist the Scriptures to conform to their own imaginations or a life-style that is patterned after this world. **Unstable:** They are unstable in the sense of being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (See comments Ep 4:11-16; 2 Tm 4:3,4). **To their own destruction:** If reference here is primarily to those mockers who refused to listen to the prophecy of Matthew 24, then they would be destroyed in the fire of Jerusalem's destruction. The same is true if reference is to the end of time. Those who refuse to listen to the warnings of Scripture concerning the coming of Jesus will be destroyed from the presence of the Lord (See comments 2 Th 1:7-9). **The Scriptures:** The term "Scriptures" was used by the Jews to refer to those writ-

ings by godly men that were proven to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures thus referred to the thirty-nine Old Testament books that composed the canon of inspired Old Testament Scriptures. It is significant to note here that Peter classifies Paul's writings as a part of the Scriptures. He thus considers Paul's writings to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and a part of the canon of writings that should be accepted by the church as the word of God. All the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were accepted as inspired Scripture, and thus, accepted to be the final word of God for all men (Jd 3; Rv 22:18,19).

**17 Beware:** Peter concludes by warning Christians not to be led astray by the immoral conduct of those who have given themselves over to the lust of the flesh (2:18; Ep 4:14). Therefore, we should seriously take to heart his warning, lest we be overcome with a sense of false security in our own minds (See comments 1 Co 10:12). The faithful can be led into sin, and thus lose their souls. **18 Grow:** It is the responsibility of each Christian to spiritually grow. The realm for growth is within the grace and knowledge of Jesus. One's realization of God's grace and knowledge that Jesus is the manifestation of the sacrificial Lamb who took away our sins, should stimulate us to spiritually grow. God has provided the motivation for spiritual growth through the revelation of His grace on the cross (Ti 2:11). It is the responsibility of Christians to grow in response to God's grace and the knowledge that Jesus sacrificed Himself for their salvation.

## The First Letter Of John

# 1 John

### Author

John the apostle and son of Zebedee does not identify himself as the author of this book. However, he has been given credit for being the inspired writer because of the similarity of grammar, writing style and content the book has with the gospel of John (See "Author" in introduction to Jn). The second 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. There is little question among biblical 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 second 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 first 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 the Jewish problem 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).

Other students affirm that the letter was written 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 writers, we would assume that there would be mention of this historical event throughout the New Testament. The closest statement in the letter that could refer to the end of national Israel would be 2:18,19. John refers to the prophecies concerning the coming of the antichrists. His statements remind us of the prophecies of Jesus in Mt 24 wherein Jesus spoke concerning the coming of those who would claim to be christi, 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 have reference 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 Israel. Since he was discussing something that was imminent, then he could not have been discussing 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 of James, 2 Peter and Jude. James, Peter and Jude all spoke of the end of national Israel (See comments Js 5:7,8; Jd 14,15).

The letter clearly deals with the beginnings of the theologies of Gnosticism that would later devastate the church in the second century. Though the Gnostic heresy developed into a great apostasy in the second 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 first century. Since the apostasy was so great in reference to the totality of the church in the Roman world, we would correctly assume that the roots of the apostasy started many years before. Therefore, though Gnosticism was not a formalized theology of the first century, the philosophical and theological concepts of the movement were in the minds of first century religionists, many of whom came into the church. There was a mixing of the roots of Gnosticism in Asia Minor with Christianity, and thus, the beliefs which 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 this time, therefore, that John, as well as Paul, wrote to combat these early beginnings of the apostasy that would grow to full force in the second century. Paul wrote prophetically. John writes from the viewpoint that the antichrists and false prophets have 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. The antichrists had arrived and John writes to reassure his readers that they are of the truth. The anointing (the Holy Spirit) was teaching them all things through the teaching of the inspired prophets of the church (2:27). Therefore, they must not be deceived into following after the doctrines of demons about which Paul wrote.

### Theme

There are two verses that express the theme of the letter. They are 5:13 and 1:13. 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.

### 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 writes to correct the doctrinal beliefs that laid the foundation for erroneous behavior.

John identifies false prophets who were going among the churches (2:22-24). They claimed to be inspired teachers of the church (4:1,2), and thus, were taking advantage of the hospitality of the church (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 prophets denied the incarnation, and thus, threatened the fellowship of the church that was based on the incarnation (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 the lives of 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 (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 thus 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. He has (1) victory over sin (ch 1), (2) victory over the evil one, Satan (ch 2), (3) victory by 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 arrogant theologies of pre-Gnostic teachers who had forsaken the foundation of Christian belief. They denied that Jesus is the Christ and that the Christ had come in the flesh. John counters the arguments of the false teachers among them who made such claims. At the same time, he reassures his readers that they can know that they have a saving relationship with God. They can know (1) that they know God (2:3), (2) that they are in God (2:5), (3) that they have been born of God (2:29), (4) that they are God's children (3:1ff), (5) that they are of the truth (3:19), (6) that they are abiding in God (4:13), and that they have 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 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 witnessed 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), and (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 writes to reassure those of his audience who are walking in the light. Since they are living the repentant life, they must be assured that God is cleansing them of all sin (1:7-9). Their confidence, therefore, is 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). On the other hand, he 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

1 ¶ That which was from the beginning, that we have heard, that we have seen with our

eyes, that we have looked upon and our hands have handled, *we proclaim* concerning the Word of life.

### Chapter 1

#### THE INCARNATE WORD

1 *That which:* John begins the letter with the Greek neuter pronoun in reference to the Son of God. He here 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 differ-

ent 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 existence 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

**2** For the life was manifested and we have seen and bear witness and show to you that eternal life that was with the Father and was manifested to us.

**3** 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.

**4** And these things we write to you so that your joy may be full.

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; Cf 1:16). **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 assumes 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 of the 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 being 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 Jn 20:27ff; Lk 24:39). **The Word of life:** John now brings us to the word *logos* (Word) which 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 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 some unit 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 work the erroneous definitions by which the word was used in philosophical and theological discussions of the first century. Simply because a word was used out of the Greek dictionary does not mean that we have to attach to it all the diversities of corrupted thinking 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, divorcing 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). **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 Jn 5:24; 3:14,15). **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 a 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. **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 which John writes is the foundation upon which this fellowship is acquired and maintained. These things he writes, therefore, are fundamental truth 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. **4 Joy may be full:** Our joy results from being assured of those things which 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

**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

**5 ¶** This then is the message that we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

**6** If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

**7** But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another

and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

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

**9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**10** If we say that we have not sinned, we

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 existence. **6** In verse 5 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 which 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). On the other hand, 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, walking in the light (See vs 3). **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).

**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 to 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 be forgiven 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 "cleanse" 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 works (See Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16; Ep 2:1-10), but on the basis of the continual cleansing blood of Jesus. **8 If we say:** John uses this statement three times in this text in order to introduce the teaching of those who are 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). **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 nature of life. It is natural for

make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

## Chapter 2

1 ¶ My little children, these things I write to you so that you do not sin. And if anyone sins, we have a Counselor with the Father, Jesus

Christ the righteous.

2 And He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

3 ¶ And by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

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, therefore, confession of sin is to God, not man (See 2:1; Hb 7:25; 10:19,20; 1 Tm 2:5). **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 to offer atonement for man's problem of sin (Ep 3:8-12). He is thus just because He has offered atonement to those who could not by either law-keeping or good works save themselves. God both forgives and cleanses. Forgiveness refers to forgetting (Hb 10:17). Cleansing refers to sanctifying one's soul 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). **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 sin 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 emotions 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.

## Chapter 2

### KEEP 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 here 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).

**1 My little children:** John was possibly an old man at the time of writing, and thus, addresses 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). **Advocate:** 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 close relationship with the Godhead in order to carry out His work of atonement for the sins of the saved. **2 Propitiation for our sins:** The English word "propitiation" is often used here 4:10 and Rm 3:25 to translate the Greek word *hilasmos*. In John's use of the word, he brings into the context the translated the Greek word that means appeasement for sin, conciliation or rendering one favorable to God. 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 so 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). **3 We know that we know Him:** This is a common

**4** He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar. And the truth is not in him.

**5** But whoever keeps His word, in him the

love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.

**6** He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

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 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). 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 religiously respond to religious traditions, we are not responding to God, but to our fathers. Only through our love of God's work and obedience 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." **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 one could 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, he establishes his salvation upon his own terms. The legalistic Jews established their salvation upon their ability to perform law and do good works. The arrogant 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). 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. **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 here the same as "in Christ." We know that we are "in Him" 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 8:1; 3:24; 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 meritoriously obey 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. Therefore, we must not trust in our ability to perform law perfectly, but in His grace to pardon our insufficiency to obey. 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. 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). **6 Ought ... to walk:** If we claim allegiance to God, we have a moral obligation to follow in Jesus' steps because He died for our sins (Mt 11:29; 1 Pt 2:21). No one can 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

**7,8** John here uses a paradox which is a supposed contradiction. He does so in order to show that knowing God is based on behaving after the manner of God,

7 ¶ Beloved, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true Light is already shining.

9 ¶ He who says he is in the Light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now.

10 He who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

11 But he who hates his brother is in dark-

ness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

12 I write to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven for His name's sake.

13 I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.

14 I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the word of God

that is, doing the will of God. **No new commandment ... an old commandment:** The first and second commandments have reference 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 (Dt 10:19; Lv 19:18; 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 unconditional 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 is fading 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). **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). **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). **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

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 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

abides in you. And you have overcome the wicked one.

**15 ¶** Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

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

**17** And the world is passing away, and the lust thereof. But he who does the will of God abides forever.

**18 ¶** Little children, it is the last hour. And as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now there are many antichrists. By this we know that it is the last hour.

**19** They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would

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. This *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 he walked in the light (1:7; see At 22:16). **His name's sake:** The sins of all Christians have been forgiven on the account of the basis of the authority of Jesus to forgive sins (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 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).

### SHUN THE WORLD

**15 Do not love the world:** Christians are not to attach themselves to the thinking of the world in order to be 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 between one's love of the world and love of God, lukewarmness or apostasy from the truth results (See comments Rv 3:15,16). **16 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). **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). **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 them away from God. **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 formed 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 (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.

### THE ANTICHRIST

**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 by the finalization of the Jewish State. 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 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 Mt 24 concerning the destruction of national Israel (See comments Mt 24). Therefore, John and his readers are 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 the church by the Jews. **You have heard:** They had been taught concerning the prophecy of Jesus in Mt 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). **Antichrist:** The Greek word here (*antichristoi*) refers to one who sets himself against Christ by putting himself in the place of Christ. He is thus against Christ by accepting from others the allegiance that should be given to Christ (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 (See Mt 24:5,23-25). In His prophecy, Jesus speaks of a plurality of those who would claim to be christs in Mt 24. By the time John

have continued with us. But *they went out* so that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

**20 ¶** But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

**21** I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it,

and because no lie is of the truth.

**22 ¶** Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

**23** Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father. He who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

wrote, John spoke of many antichrists who had gone out in the world (See vs 22; 4:3). In 2 John 7 he identifies the doctrine of those who are antichrists. "*For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*" Jesus spoke of Jews who would arise in order to call fellow Jews into insurrection against Rome. They would claim to be the Christ. John speaks of those in the fellowship of the church who would deny the incarnation. In both cases, the word "antichrist" would apply. An antichrist is anyone who would set himself against the work of Christ either by proclaiming himself to be Christ or teaching those things that are contrary to Christ. **By this we know it is the last hour:** Since Jesus used the false christs 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 the antichrists to signify the presence of the last days of national Israel. **19 They went out from us:** John identifies the antichrists about whom he speaks as those who were once in the fellowship of Christians (See 4:1-6; 5:6-12; compare 2 Pt 2:20-22). However, they left the church, and thus, were no longer in the fellowship of the saints. It was not that they gave up religiosity in order to live nonreligious lives. They doctrinally and behaviorally left the truth in order to create religious beliefs and behavior after their own desires. **They were not of us:** They did not have the same spirit of obedience to the truth 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 baptism to the behavioral manner of life that is motivated by one's response to the grace of God (See Jn 6:37; Mt 13:20,21; 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 church because they did not understand the nature of either Christ or the church. These were possibly those who had come into the church on 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). **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 (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 anoint-

ing 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. **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 had been revealed to them through the preaching of the gospel in 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 supposed knowledge the Gnostic false teachers claimed which supposedly elevated them above those who did not have such spiritual insights. **22 He 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, 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 scheme 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. **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

**24 ¶** Therefore, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will continue in the Son and in the Father.

**25** And this is the promise that He has promised us: eternal life.

**26 ¶** These things I have written to you concerning those who *are trying* to deceive you.

**27** But the anointing that you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need

that anyone teach you. But as the same anointing teaches you all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

**28 ¶** And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him at His coming.

**29** If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness has been born from Him.

1:18; 14:6,9; 15:23; 2 Jn 9). **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). **25 The promise:** See Jn 17:3. In knowing the Father and Son one has the promise of dwelling in eternity (Ti 1:2; Ph 3:9; 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

**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 upon the church (4:1-6). John sees the apostates as having already left, but reaching back to deceive, and thus, lead out of the church others who would follow after their antichrist doctrines. **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 has reference to remaining in them. God (4:11-16; 1 Co 3:16; 6:16; Ph 2:13; 1 Th 1:1), Christ (2 Co 5:17; Rm 8:10; 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 (Ph 2:5; 1 Co 2:16; Cl 3:16; 1 Jn 2:14) 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 state 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 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.

**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 maintain obedience to the commandments of God, 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). **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:** Everyone 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 affirms 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.

### Chapter 3

1 ¶ Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God. And *such* we are. Therefore, the world does not know us because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be. But we know that when He appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is.

3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

4 ¶ Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins. And in Him there is no sin.

6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has not seen Him or known Him.

7 ¶ Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous,

### Chapter 3

#### CHILDREN OF GOD

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. 2 **It has not 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 conformed 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 transformed 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 handled 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 shall indwell in eternal heaven. Since the Scriptures teach that there will be an embodiment for heaven, we do know that we will not be dislocated 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 **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 sepa-

rated 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 cleansing blood of Jesus (1:7-9). They will thus be presented perfect in Christ (Cl 1:22,28).

#### DEFINITION OF SIN

4 **Sin is lawlessness:** 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, do not sin. They are thus pure and safe from the wrath of God because they have not consciously 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. 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." 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 neither 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

just as He is righteous.

**8** He who commits sin is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, so that He might destroy the works of the devil.

**9** Whoever has been born from God does not commit sin, for His seed remains in him. And he cannot sin because he is born from God.

**10 ¶** In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not from God,

nor the one who does not love his brother.

**11** For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,

**12** not as Cain, *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And for what reason did he murder him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.

**13 ¶** My brethren, do not marvel if the world hates you.

**14** We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. He who

the physical world (vss 3-5; compare comments 1 Co 3:1-3). **7,8 Let no one deceive you:** The fact that the Christian can be deceived demands this warning that they not be deceived (vss 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 sin. **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 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. **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 righteousness 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). **Does not commit sin:** They do not continue in a life of sin because they have resolved to live after the righteousness 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 which 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

**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). On the other hand, 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. **11 Love one another:** This is the foundation upon which law is based (See comments Mt 22:37-40). Jesus reinstated and reemphasized the Old Testament 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. **12** Cain's actions were the opposite of the love God wishes that Christians manifest toward one another (Gn 4:1-17). **His 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, what 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.

**13 Do not marvel:** Christians should not think that it is strange that the world would hate them. If they do, then they never really understood the nature of the life they accepted and what the fellowship of God would

does not love abides in death.

**15** Whoever hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

**16 ¶** By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

**17** But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

**18 ¶** My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

**19** And by this we will know that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him.

**20** For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

**21** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

**22** And whatever we ask, we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

**23** And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus

mean in their relationship with the world (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). **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 from the world, therefore, is evidence of one's behavioral life after the will of 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. **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 that 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. **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). **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 their brothers. Paul's remedy for laziness in the church is, "*If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat*" (2 Th 3:10). Those who have the world's goods are obligated to help unfortunate brethren 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 Chris-

tian. 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

**18 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. **19 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 is our response to God's good work toward us through the cross (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15). 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). **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. In other words, 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. **21 We have confidence toward God:** There is a difference between conscientiously 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). **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

Christ, and love one another, just as He gave us commandment.

**24 ¶** And he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given to us.

### Chapter 4

**1 ¶** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from

God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

**2** By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

**3** and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard was coming, and even now is already in the world.

**4 ¶** You are from God, little children, and have

that are pleasing to God (See Ps 34:15; Pv 15:29; Jr 29:12; Mt 7:8; Jn 8:29; Hb 13:21). **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). **24** See Jn 14:23; see 15:1ff). Being in Christ is conditioned on one's obedient response to the grace of God (Rm 6:3-6; Gl 3:26,27; 1 Co 12:13). **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 which 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. 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 which came to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, then truly that person is not of God.

### Chapter 4

#### FALSE TEACHERS

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 prophets, that is, false in their representation of the truth (Mt 7:15ff; 24:5,11; compare Jr 29:8; Mt 24:4). The definition of "false prophets" refers to those who are denying fun-

damental 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 first century Christians through the miraculous gift of discerning of spirits, could determine whether one was preaching the truth 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 first century because the word of God had not been written by which teachings of men could be compared. 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 by comparing 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. If one affirms to have the Spirit, and does not speak according to the truth of the Bible, then he does not have the Spirit. **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). **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). By means of the confessed belief that Jesus did come in the flesh, his readers could determine if one were preaching the truth of the incarnation (See comments Ph 2:6-8; 2 Jn 7; compare 1 Co 12:3). Those who did not make such a confession were antichrist (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. **3 Not from God:** Those who do not confess that Jesus Christ is 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. **Antichrist ... is already in the world:** All who would not confess that Jesus originated from God have identified themselves as antichrists (2:18-23). The inspired apostles had preached the coming of those who would deny the incarnation. John's readers had heard

overcome them, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

**5** They are from the world. Therefore, they speak from the world and the world hears them.

**6** We are from God. He who knows God hears us. He who is not from God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

**7 ¶** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And everyone who loves is born from God and knows God.

**8** He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

**9** In this the love of God was manifested to us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

**10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but

this message from (1) John's former teaching, (2) the inspired message of their prophets (Compare 2 Th 2:7), and (3) through 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 church. 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. **4 You are from God:** They were of God because they affirmed the fundamental teaching that the Christ had come in the flesh (5:4). They were born of God through their obedience to the gospel (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 (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). Deity that dwelt in them was greater than Satan who is 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 originates from God, including Satan (See Cl 1:16). Satan has a beginning and 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). **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. **6** In contrast to what John said in verse 5, those who hear the revealed truth of the apostles and prophets are identified as being born out of God. Their disposition of readiness to 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.

### THE LOVING NATURE OF GOD

**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 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 know 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 the church as God has loved the church. **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 the 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. It was not manifested because Jesus had emptied Himself of the "form of God" when He came to this world (See comments Ph 2:6-8). **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.

that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

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

**12 ¶** No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us.

**13** By this we know that we dwell in Him

and He in us, because He has given *to us* from His Spirit.

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

**15** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him and he in God.

**16** And we have known and believed the love

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). **Live through Him:** Through Jesus only is their life (5:10,11; Jn 14:6; see At 4:12). **10 But that He loved us:** Herein is the definition of the *agape* (love) about which John is talking 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 unlovely (Jn 15:16). The *agape* (love) of God, therefore, was given with 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. **Propitiation for our sins:** The word "propitiation" is used only here and in 2:2, Rm 3:25 and Hb 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). **11 We ought also to love:** John here 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. This letter of John deals with the fundamental belief of the incarnation of God in order to bring about the scheme 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. **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 and He thus 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, God indwells them (2:28). God's love is thus perfected in us in the sense that the divine scheme of community is made complete through the church of people who maintain the attributes of the One who died for the church (See comments Jn 13:34,35). Our loving of one another and loving God through the keeping of His commandments complete God's love that was revealed through Jesus in order to redeem us (2:5; 4:16,17). **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 which John and the apostles possessed. Therefore, John emphasizes not the receiving of the Spirit, but what the Spirit gave. And what the Spirit gave was the power to unleash the evidential manifestation 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). **14 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 and had witnessed Him after His resurrection. **15 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). **God dwells in him:** God abides in the one whose life is given over to following after God. John here defines the indwelling

that God has for us. God is love, and he who dwells in love dwells in God and God in him. **17 ¶** In this is our love made perfect, so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. Because as He is, so also are we in this world.

**18** There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment. He who fears is not made perfect in love.

**19** We love because He first loved us.

**20 ¶** If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

**21** And this commandment we have from Him, that he who loves God *should* love his brother also.

## Chapter 5

**1 ¶** Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born from God. And everyone who loves Him who gives birth also loves him who is born of Him.

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

**3** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments

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. **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 comes to understand the nature of God (Jn 17:25,26). The definition of the indwelling of God is the obedient love in one's life to the commandments of God.

### LOVE AND ASSURANCE

**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 man (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. 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). **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). **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. **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. **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. **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 begotten:** 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

are not burdensome.

**4** For whoever is born from God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.

**5** Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

**6 ¶** This is He who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by the water only, but by

the water and the blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth.

**7** For there are three who bear witness:

**8** the Spirit and the water and the blood. And these three are in agreement.

**9 ¶** If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. For this is the witness

into the one church of Christ through their obedience to the one gospel (See Rm 6:3-6; see comments Rm 14).

**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 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. **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 Bible, 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 outburst. 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. 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. Those who consider it a burden to do the will of God are not yet made perfect in love. **4 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 by immersion into the death and resurrection of Jesus have overcome the mentality and behavior of the world (2:15; see Jn 16:33). "*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors 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.

#### VICTORY THROUGH JESUS

**5 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 (Jn 16:33; see Rm 8:37; 1 Co 15:57). **6** John here emphasizes the witness of Jesus through His humanity and deity. He argues against both the Cerinthian and Docetic Gnostics. **By water and blood:** Through His baptism Jesus witnessed that He was truly human in that He submitted to the will of God as God's Son (Mt 3:15; Hb 5:9). Through His death on the cross, He gave witness of 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). **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 sixteenth 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 form 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).

of God, that He has testified concerning His Son.

**10** He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. He who does not believe God, has made Him a liar, because he does not believe the testimony that God gave of His Son.

**11** And this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son.

**12** He who has the Son has the life. He who

does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

**13** 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.

**14** ¶ And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

**15** And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked from Him.

The Father gave witness of Jesus through the miraculous works of Jesus (Jn 3:2; Hb 2:3,4). Jesus also gave witness of 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 Lord's Day disciples remember the covenant they have with God as they partake of the Lord's Supper (Mt 26:26-29; 1 Co 11:26). Every witness that is made of the incarnation and sonship of Jesus agree as one. **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). **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). When one believes the inspired witness of Jesus as 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. **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 (Mk 10:29,30; 2 Co 5:1-8; Ti 1:2; 1 Jn 2:25). **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). **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 upon one's response to the will of God in obedience to the gospel.

#### PURPOSE FOR WRITING

**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 before transitioning into the heavenly realm.

**14 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). **¶15 We have the petitions:** When we are confident that God hears our prayers, then we

**16 ¶** If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he will ask and He will give to him life for those who do not commit sin unto death. There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he should pray for this.

**17** All unrighteousness is sin. And there is a sin not *leading* to death.

**18 ¶** We know that whoever is born from God does not sin. But he who is born from God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

**19 ¶** And we know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in wickedness.

**20 ¶** And we know that the Son of God is come and has given us understanding so that

will see His answers (See comments Mk 11:24).

**16** In these statements we must keep in mind that John is writing to those who are faithful. He is writing concerning their responsibility to those who are 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 are 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 are 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. On the other hand, 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 upon 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 upon which our faith is based. 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 thinking 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). **17 All unrighteousness is sin:** Sin is here defined as a free-moral negative reaction 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 the fundamental beliefs of the New Testament (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

**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 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 in 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 introduction 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 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 voluntarily take one away from God. One must voluntarily make a free-moral decision to fall away (See comments 1 Pt 5:8). **19 We know:** Again John reaffirms the confidence of the Christian. By keeping God's commandments, 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 the incarnation of Jesus. Jesus was the manifestation of the God of heaven who came into this world. We follow after Jesus, and thus, 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

we may know Him who is true. And we are in Him who is true, *even* in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

21 ¶ Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

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. **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. **This is the true God:** John concludes this letter with the affirmation that Jesus is 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 God. The eternal Godhead has manifested

Himself through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, He remains the one true God. **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 an image of their imagination on a piece of stone or wood. 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.

## The Second Letter Of John

# 2 John

### Author

This document of the New Testament is referred to as the second letter of John, the apostle who was the son of Zebedee and Salome (See "Author" in the introduction to Jn).

John uses the word "elder" (*presbuteros*) in verse 1 to identify himself as the writer. It is a word of respect that was used by both Jews and Gentiles, and subsequently, used by the church to show respect to John (See 1 Pt 5:1). John's authorship of the letter is affirmed by the Apostolic Fathers who wrote in the second century. The letter has the same literary style of 1 and 3 John. The other two letters also contain similar thoughts as this letter.

### Date:

Many Bible students believe that this letter was written somewhere between A.D. 80 and 90. However, an early date for the letter would be more likely. Some students affirm that the letter was written shortly before A.D. 70, possibly around A.D. 67,68. The deceivers who were already present and going among the disciples were teaching a doctrine that Jesus Christ had not come in the flesh (vs 7). If John's reference in verse 7 is to the judaizing teachers who could have accepted Jesus as a teacher but not the incarnate Christ, then the letter would have historical relevance to the time before A.D. 70.

### Theme:

The theme of the letter is identified by the fact that the word "truth" is used five times. John thus writes concerning our loyalty to the truth that was revealed through Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17). In support of this theme, he uses the word "commandments" four times, "teaching" three times, and pronouns in reference to these words four times. It is thus a letter reaffirming the truth of God in which the elect lady and her children walked.

### Purpose

The letter is directed to the elect lady and her children. It has been difficult to determine the identity of the elect lady. However, the purpose for which John writes is to encourage her and her children to walk after the loving nature of Christianity and be obedient to the commandments of Jesus. He writes to warn her of those who are going about with a doctrine that denies fundamental teachings concerning the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

1 ¶ The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth,  
2 for the sake of the truth that dwells in us and will be with us forever.

3 ¶ Grace, mercy and peace will be with us

from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

4 ¶ I rejoiced greatly that I found your children walking in truth, just as we have received a commandment from the Father.

5 And now I urge you, lady, not as though

### INTRODUCTION

1 **The elder:** The Greek article is here used before the word *presbuteros* in order to indicate a specific person. The elder here is not just an older person, but one who is acquainted with the elect lady and her children. Therefore, it is assumed that the elder is John the apostle. **Elect lady:** The word "elect" indicates that this particular lady was chosen or selected for a specific work or for a specific purpose. In a generic sense, she was a Christian lady who had children. She also had a sister who had children (vs 13). If she were or had been married, we might assume that her husband was dead or that he was an unbeliever. She was a woman who was given to hospitality of the saints, specifically those who were teachers (vs 10; see 3 Jn 5-8). Some students have assumed that John's use of the term "elect lady" is a metaphorical reference to the church. The church was elect, and thus, the elect bride for Christ when He returns (See comments Rv 12). On the other hand, there are several reasons to affirm that reference here is to a specific person. The Greek word *kuria* (lady) means "lady," and in verse 5 it is used in the vocative case, thus indicating a specific person. It is used nowhere else in the New Testament. The elect lady here has children. Such would not be characteristic of the church, for the church does not have children. The people are the church. In 1 Peter 5:13 reference is made to Peter's wife as the "elect sister." The similar reference to the elect lady in this context would indicate that reference here is also to a specific sister. **Love in truth:** This is to love someone because of their obedience of and devotion to the life and teachings of Jesus (1 Jn 3:18; 3 Jn 1). The elect lady and her children were known throughout the church for loving the truth that Jesus was the revealed Son of God. **All those who have known the truth:** The manner by which John makes this statement infers that if this lady were a specific person, she was known by the church as a whole. Some students, therefore, have affirmed that the elect lady was Mary, the mother of Jesus. It was into John's care that Jesus had placed Mary at the time of the cross (Jn 19:25-27). If the letter was written in the latter part of the 60s, this assumption could possibly be true, for Mary would have been in her latter 60s or early seventies. **2 Truth that abides in us:** It is the truth that Jesus is the Son of God that abides in us as His life permeates our lives because of our submission to His will (See Cl 3:16; 1 Jn 2:14,24; 3:19). It is the life of Jesus that abides in us

and will be with us throughout eternal existence (Compare Mt 24:35; 1 Pt 1:25). **3 Grace:** Since no man could live without sin, only those who will be saved are those who are saved by God's grace (Rm 1:7; 5:1,2; Ep 2:5-9; 1 Tm 1:2; Ti 2:11; see comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). **Mercy:** Mercy sets aside punishment that law says one must receive. Grace and mercy are always together, for God's grace leads to His mercy in reference to our salvation (Ep 2:4,5). **Peace:** The grace and mercy of God always results in peace between God and man. Man is relieved of the guilt of sin by the grace of God. He is thus spared from the just wrath of God that will be poured out upon those who have not come into a covenant relationship with God through Jesus (See 2 Th 1:7-9). Those who have come into a covenant relationship with God have peace of mind. They have such because they trust in God's grace and not in their own performance of law in order to be saved (Ph 4:7; compare Rm 1:7; 1 Tm 1:2; 2 Tm 1:2; 1 Pt 1:2). Grace, mercy and peace come from God through the reconciliation offered on the cross. However, the reception of such is conditioned upon the obedience of those who would respond to the cross (See Rm 6:3-6).

### WALKING IN THE COMMANDMENTS

4 **I rejoiced greatly:** John rejoiced greatly concerning the faithfulness of those who have given themselves to obey the Lord (See 3 Jn 3,4). **Walking in truth:** John's joy was in the fact that those he had converted were remaining faithful to the calling of the gospel by which they were called into fellowship with God (1 Jn 1:5-7; 2:4,7; 3 Jn 3). He rejoiced over the faithfulness of the children of the elect lady who were remaining obedient to Jesus. **We have received commandment:** There is a standard by which all men must live. It is not in men who live to direct their own lives by inventing their own religious laws (Jr 10:23). The more one directs his beliefs and obedience by his own traditions or emotions, the more he is directed away from depending upon God (See comments Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:1-9). Because it is not possible for men to construct their own religions that would bring them closer to God, God has given men His law that they might be directed in the way of the Lord (See Mt 11:28-30; Jn 6:45). **5 A new commandment:** The commandment that the elect lady had heard from the time of her conversion was the commandment to love as Jesus had loved us (Jn 13:34,35; 15:12,17; 1 Jn 3:11,23; 4:7,11; see comments 1 Jn

writing a new commandment to you, but what we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

**6** And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

**7 ¶** For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

**8** Look to yourselves so that you do not lose those things that we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

**9 ¶** Whoever goes ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. He who abides in the teaching of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son.

**10** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house and do not give him greeting.

**11** For he who gives him greeting partici-

2:7,8). Jesus gave the new commandment during His ministry. However, it is new at the time of the conversion of any individual who submits in obedience to the gospel (Compare 1 Jn 2:7,24; 3:11). **6 This is love:** "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 Jn 5:3; see Jn 14:15; 15:14; 1 Jn 2:5,24). True love is defined by action on the part of the one who responds to the love of God (1 Jn 4:19; see Gl 5:6). **You should walk in it:** John is talking about a behavioral pattern of life. One must believe correct fundamental doctrines that pertain to truth (See comments Ep 4:4-6). However, fundamental truths are useless unless they motivate one to carry out behavioral love toward one's fellow man (See comments Jn 13:34,35; 14:15,21; 1 Jn 2:7-11; 3:18,23,24; 4:19-21).

#### WARNING OF DECEIVERS

**7 Deceivers have gone out into the world:** The sect of Docetic Gnostics affirmed that the Christ came as a phantom or spirit that did not appear in the flesh (See Jn 1:1,14; Ph 2:6-8). They thus denied the fundamental doctrine of the incarnation of God in order to offer Himself in atonement for the sins of men (See comments 1 Jn 4:2; 5:6). These deceivers were wandering about from church to church, teaching those things that denied the fundamental doctrine of the incarnation. **Deceiver and the antichrist:** The antichrist (*antichristoi*) about whom John here speaks was not a specific personality that would come in the future. He uses the term here to refer to anyone who would promote the false doctrine of denying the incarnation (See comments 1 Tm 4:1f; 1 Jn 2:18,22; 4:1-3). We must not dismiss from this context the possibility that John is talking about judaizing teachers who may have claimed that Jesus was a good teacher of Israel, but not the incarnate Son of God and Messiah of Israel. These teachers were certainly going about from church to church (See introduction to Gl). When the Jews of Asia Minor brought into their theology the mysticism of pre-gnostic concepts, they developed a Judaeo-Gnosticism that later infiltrated the church when these Jews were converted to Christianity. They seem to have brought into the church their Gnostic concepts that distorted the incarnate nature of the Son of God. Though we do not know the origin of the doctrine of the denial that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, we must assume that the origin was from the religious community from which conversions were made in the vicinity of John's readers. **8 Look to yourselves:** The elect lady and her children must continually examine themselves lest they be led astray by the deceivers

who denied the incarnation. Such is a good warning to all Christians who might be led astray by deceptive doctrines (See Mk 13:9; 1 Co 10:12; 2 Co 13:5; 1 Jn 5:21). John thus places the responsibility for remaining faithful on the back of the believers. Each disciple is responsible for himself in reference to his faithfulness to the Lord. **That you do not lose:** It is an ever present possibility that a Christian can forsake his belief in those things that stimulate obedience. He can thus turn from his walk in the light to fall away, and thus be lost (See Gl 3:4; Hb 6:4-6; 2 Pt 2:20-22). In order to lose something, one must first possess it. In this case, the elect lady and her children had gained salvation by the grace of God through their obedience to the will of God. However, they could lose such if they turned away from the truth (See 2 Tm 4:7,8; Rv 14:13; compare Jn 4:36; 6:27).

**9 Goes ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ:** The word for "transgress" (*proagon*) here means to go onward or before (Compare the use of the word in 1 Tm 1:18; Hb 7:18). The one who goes beyond that which is spoken does not abide in the "form of teaching" to which he was obedient (See comments Rm 6:17; compare Jn 8:31; At 17:24; Gl 1:6-9; Rv 22:18,19). John's emphasis here is on the one who binds beyond that which is bound by God and those who loose where God has not loosed. This is the one who goes beyond what God has required, and thus, does not abide in what God has delivered. He binds where God has not bound and looses where God has not loosed (See comments Mt 16:19). **Does not have God:** The conditions for remaining in a covenant fellowship with the Father and Son are to confess the Son (1 Jn 2:23), and to (2) remain in the truth of the incarnation of the Son. When one confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, and thus, allows his life to be directed by this confession, he will direct his life by the teachings of Jesus. In this he will have life (1 Jn 5:11,12). **10 This teaching:** The context here is in reference to those teachers who denied the incarnation (vs 7). Those who denied the incarnation were denying the sonship of Jesus, and thus, denying a fundamental doctrine upon which the church is built and our salvation affirmed (See comments Mt 16:18,19). **Do not receive him:** Those who denied the incarnation were taking advantage of the hospitality of the saints (See Rm 12:13; 3 Jn 5-8). They were going about from house to house, teaching against the foundation upon which the church was built. They were denying the incarnation of the Christ. **Do not give him greeting:** The elect lady should not give these antichrists any hospitality. John's admonition is that the

pates in his evil deeds.

**12 ¶** Having many things to write to you, I did not want to *write* with paper and ink. But I trust to come to you and speak face to face

so that our joy may be full.

**13 ¶** The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

faithful should do nothing that would encourage these false teachers in their works of denial (See Ti 1:10,11; 1 Tm 1:6; 2 Tm 3:6; Rm 16:17). Therefore, the Christian has no obligation to help in any way those who would deny the truth of the incarnate Christ, the humanity of God in Jesus, and His atonement for the sins of men on the cross. **11** John is warning Christians not to allow themselves to be placed in a position of compromise with open and known teachers who deny the fundamental truth of the incarnate deity of Jesus Christ (See 2 Co 6:14ff; 1 Tm 5:22,24,25; Rv 18:4). **Evil deeds:** It is an evil deed to deny any fundamental teaching (Compare Mt 7:22,23). It is important, therefore, to teach correctly those fundamental doctrines that pertain to the incarnation of the Christ.

**12 Many things to write:** We wish that John had written more (3 Jn 13,14). However, on the subject of the incarnation, he has revealed no more truth in this letter than what he wrote in his account of the life and teachings of Jesus in the record of the gospel (See Jn 20:30,31). He was planning on visiting the elect lady, and thus, there was no reason to write a lengthy letter. We could assume, therefore, that all that God wanted revealed to us concerning the nature and truth of the incarnation of Jesus had already been revealed and written by the time this letter was written. There was no need for the Holy Spirit to repeat Himself. **13 The children:** This salutation is from the children of the sister of the woman to whom John wrote. Thus the children were addressing their aunt.

## The Third Letter Of John

# 3 John

### Author

This is the third letter by John the apostle who was the son of Zebedee and Salome (See "Author" in introduction to Jn).

### Date

There are some Bible students who affirm that this letter was written between A.D. 80 and 90. However, it is probably that the letter was written sometime before A.D. 70.

### Theme

The theme of John's message to Gaius is that Gaius continue in his faithful work of financial fellowship with evangelists who have gone forth for the sake of the Name of Jesus (vs 8).

### Historical Background

In the first century the evangelists went forth to preach the gospel throughout the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,20). They were sent forth by churches and individual Christians (At 13:1-3; Rm 10:14,15). In their travels, they stayed with Christians as Gaius who also individually sent them forth to preach. In the church situation where Gaius was located, a brother by the name of Diotrephes was hindering God's system of evangelism. He had intimidated the brethren from carrying out their duties of supporting evangelists. Because of his domination of the disciples in his area, he would not receive evangelists. He would not allow others over whom he had control to receive these evangelists. Out of desperation, Gaius possibly wrote to John in order to explain the situation. John wrote this brief letter in return because he planned to come and deal directly with the problem. John wrote to reassure Gaius for his faithful work of supporting evangelists (vss 1-8). In this letter, John identified the arrogant nature and practice of dictatorial leaders as Diotrephes (vss 9,10). He encouraged Gaius to maintain fellowship with brothers as Demetrius until he came to deal directly with the problem (vss 11,12).

In dealing with the problem that had arisen among the disciples where Gaius worked, John makes a contrast between two styles of leadership. Gaius represents a leadership style that is patterned after the nature of loving the truth and understanding the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, Diotrephes represents an autocratic, or even dictatorial leadership style that is the result of a desire for power and control over one's fellow man. It may have been that Diotrephes was

sincere in his behavior, however, he was seriously wrong in how he dealt with fellow disciples. He was working against God because he was hindering Christians from carrying out their responsibility of taking the gospel to all the world.

**1 ¶** The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

**2 ¶** Beloved, I pray that in all things you may prosper and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

**3** For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in truth.

**4** I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.

**5 ¶** Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and especially for strangers,

**6** who have borne witness of your love before the church. You will do well to support them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.

**1 The elder:** John identifies himself as the older brother. He identifies himself with this brief letter as he did with 2 John in order that his readers associate him as the inspired writer of both epistles (See comments 2 Jn 1). **Gaius:** This was a common name of the first century. It is used several times in the New Testament where reference is not necessarily to the same person (See At 19:29; 20:4; Rm 16:23; 1 Co 1:14). It could be that this Gaius is one of the disciples that is mentioned in other New Testament books. There is no way of knowing for sure if such is the case. In this letter, this Gaius is identified as a close friend of God. **Whom I love in truth:** The Greek article is not present before "truth," and thus, reference is to truth in general. John's love for Gaius was true. It was also based on the truth (See comments 1 Jn 1:3; 3:18; 2 Jn 1). It is the truth, therefore, that establishes our relationships with one another. These relationships are stronger than physical family relationships.

#### REASSURANCE OF GAIUS

**2 I pray that in all things you may prosper:** The statements John here makes concerning his prayer for Gaius identifies the apostle's relationship with this great spiritual man. John prays that Gaius materially prosper and be in good health "just as" he was spiritually prospering. Herein is a Christ-sent apostle praying for the financial prosperity of a brother whose spiritual prosperity – if it could be measured – excelled beyond both material prosperity and bodily health. Such is the nature of spiritually minded leaders. Good leaders are careful to maintain their spiritual prosperity in order that their material prosperity not take control of their lives. They always seek first kingdom business (Mt 6:33; see comments Mt 6:19-34; Rm 12:1,2; Cl 3:1-3). This is the nature of good leadership in the church in reference to material things. The spiritual greatness of Gaius motivated the apostle to make prayers for him. We would thus assume that Gaius would characterize the type of leader we would follow in the church. **3 Brethren ... testified of the truth that is in you:** Great leaders in the church have a good reputation concerning the truth that is in them. The traveling evangelists who were going about from house church to house church were giving testimony to the fellowship that Gaius extended to them. **You walk in truth:** John's reference here to "truth" is not that Gaius believed a set of rules that conformed to correct doctrine. The context identifies that about which he speaks. Gaius was behaving after the

nature of that truth Jesus revealed to us (See comments 1 Jn 3:17-19; see comments Jn 4:24; 13:34,35). To walk in truth is to walk in love. Walking in love means to care for our brother, especially those who are going about preaching the gospel. This was the truth in which Gaius was walking. This was the truth that Diotrephes was denying by his refusal to receive these evangelists. **4 No greater joy:** The Greek phrase here is emphatic, and thus, expresses great rejoicing on the part of John. In his effort to reassure Gaius that he is doing the right things in reference to the traveling evangelists, he expresses his overwhelming joy of hearing that one of his converts is maintaining behavior that is worthy of the gospel (See comments Ph 1:27). That which brings joy to the heart of evangelists is to hear that churches they have established are striving together in unity with lives that are molded after the nature of the gospel of love they received (See 1 Co 4:15; Ph 1:10). Evangelists that sow seeds of legalistic thinking will be saddened when they begin to hear reports from those churches they established that they are biting and devouring one another (See comments Gl 5:15). In the case here, John had planted the right seeds of love and unity in the heart of a great Christian who was having difficulty with a brother who was lording over the flock of God (Compare 1 Pt 4:1-4).

#### SUPPORTING EVANGELISTS

**5 You do faithfully:** The faithful work Gaius was laboring to do was to be hospitable to those traveling evangelists who were going forth to preach the gospel and teach the truth (Compare Rm 12:13; Hb 13:2; 1 Pt 4:9). Though there is some difficulty in translating this verse, it seems that those Gaius was entertaining were often strangers to him at the time he received them. Or, reference could be to being hospitable to anyone who might need to be received (See Hb 13:2; see Gl 6:10). Whatever the case in this verse, Gaius was a most hospitable person who opened the doors of his home and his pocket in order to help people who were in transit. Such is characteristic of those who would be great leaders in the church (See 1 Tm 3:2). They will especially help traveling evangelists on their mission to preach the gospel to the world. **6 Who have borne witness of your love:** Those traveling brethren who were cared for by Gaius went forth telling others of the hospitable love by which Gaius had received them. **Support them on their journey:** The Greek verb here is from *propempe* which refers to financially sending one forth

**7** For they went forth for the sake of the Name, taking nothing from the Gentiles.

**8** Therefore, we ought to show hospitality to such men so that we might be fellow workers for the truth.

**9 ¶** I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not receive

us.

**10** Therefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds that he does, unjustly accusing us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who would, and casts *them* out of the church.

on his journey. In the first century, this word referred to accompanying one part way on his journey, and then, financially making it possible for the traveler to continue to his next destination (See At 15:3; 21:5; Rm 15:24; 1 Co 16:6,11; 2 Co 1:16; Ti 3:13). **You will do well:** Diotrephes had discouraged Gaius and other disciples concerning their responsibility to support evangelists who were going about preaching the gospel (vs 10). John thus writes to encourage Gaius that what he is doing is a job well done. Those who would do well in fulfilling their responsibilities as a vital link in God's plan for world evangelism must do as Gaius (Rm 10:14,15). They must receive and send forth those who have committed themselves to preach the gospel to the world. Good leaders lead the church in carrying out this work that God has given to every Christian. **7,8** In these two verses John reassures and encourages Gaius by giving three reasons why individual Christians should support evangelists who are going about preaching the gospel and establishing churches. (1) The evangelists have gone forth in order to proclaim the name of Jesus among the nations. John deduces that since they have done such, then it is the responsibility of every Christian who understands that this is also his mission, to support evangelists in their work. (2) Since the evangelists took no contributions from the unbelievers to whom they went, then John deduces that those who believe must support them (See comments At 18:3; 20:33-35; 1 Co 9:6-18; 2 Co 11:7-11). (3) Since the evangelists have gone forth for the sake of the truth, John again assumes that we can deduce that we support them in order to be fellow workers for the truth of the gospel they preach (Rm 13:8,9; Ph 2:25; 4:3; Pl 24). The partnership between those who go forth and those who send forth is effective in world evangelism as long as everyone plays their part. When either those sent or those who send do not carry out their God-ordained responsibilities in reference to the preaching of the gospel to the world, then men lose their souls. In order to emphasize the responsibility of the senders, John states that "we ought" to carry out our responsibility in this area of world evangelism since this is the reasonable thing to do as Christians (See At 13:1-3; see comments Ph 4:10-18). Those who do not fulfill this responsibility have not understood the mission of the One after whom they call themselves (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15; Lk 19:10).

#### THE SINS OF DIOTREPHESES

**9,10** John here explains the problem that is not only facing Gaius, but also the entire church in carrying out their duties to function as a church of Christ in evangelism. The problem is a dictatorial leader who has assumed control, and thus, is intimidating the disciples to conform to his wishes. **I wrote:** John's reference here could be to the letter of 2 John. However, it could

also be to a letter that John had previously written, but was destroyed by Diotrephes. John wrote the letter, but such a letter need not to have been an inspired letter that the Holy Spirit intended for the church to have as a part of the New Testament canon. Every letter the apostles wrote did not have to be an inspired document. Whatever the case, Diotrephes possibly destroyed the letter in order to shut off contact of the church with those outside the realm of his dictatorial control. **Diotrephes:** In some way Diotrephes gained great control over this church. It is difficult to determine how he gained such control. One answer may be found in the name "Diotrephes." This name means "Zeus reared offspring of Zeus." It was given to the children of those who were born into families of social status, nobility or the higher economic classes of society. It may have been that Diotrephes grew up in a position of high social standing. He was later converted to Christianity, and subsequently, brought into the church the community respect he had before becoming a Christian. The brethren simply maintained their respect for him that he had from them when he was outside the fellowship of the church. John indicates from the use of the phrase "love to have the pre-eminence" that Diotrephes took advantage of the humble hearts of the disciples. And thus, over a period of time he gained a controlling hand in order to command the affairs of the disciples. In this letter, John does not condemn the disciples for allowing Diotrephes to gain such control. He goes after Diotrephes who took advantage of those whose nature had been formed after the servanthood of Jesus (See comments Mk 10:35-45). Therefore, John lists six sins of Diotrephes that are typical of the behavior of dictatorial leaders who seek to steal the sheep of God by their practice of intimidating the flock of God to submit to their leadership. (1) **Loves to be first:** Preeminence refers to one who loves to be first. This desire is completely contrary to the servanthood spirit that Jesus taught (See comments Mt 22:20-28; Mk 10:35-45). Those men who thirst for an occasion to rule over their fellow man will seek an opportunity to take advantage of the servanthood attitude of the disciples (See comments At 8:18-23). Their sin is in stealing away the lordship of Jesus by intimidating disciples to submit to their rules and regulations. (2) **Does not receive us:** The pronoun "us" possibly refers to John and the other apostles. John may have included the traveling evangelists in this pronoun, though he follows later with a statement concerning Diotrephes not receiving the "brethren." Whatever the case here, at least one thing is identified. It is the nature of those who love to dominate that they reject anyone who might threaten their self-proclaimed position of being a leader in the church. Since Diotrephes had commanded the sole leadership role of the church, he did not want anyone else coming in who might rebuke him for his domi-

**11 ¶** Beloved, do not follow what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is from God. He who does evil has not seen God.

**12** Demetrius has a good report from all, and of the truth itself. And we *also* bear testimony, and you know that our testimony is true.

**13 ¶** I had many things to write to you, but I will not with ink and pen write *them* to you.

**14** But I hope to see you shortly, and we will speak face to face. Peace *be* to you. *Our* friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

neering control of the church. Therefore, John and any other evangelist or apostle was not received by Diotrephes. (3) **Accusing us with malicious words:** This third sin of Diotrephes is the natural behavior of those who would seek to maintain a dictatorial role among the brethren. In order to keep outside influence away from the local brethren, the dictatorial ruler must recruit the local brethren to help him keep others out. Therefore, he resorts to slander in order to defame those he considers to be a threat to his domination over the church. Through slander he convinces the church that others are "false teachers" who must be shunned, and thus, kept from influencing the church. Therefore, Diotrephes sought to defame John and others in order to convince the disciples that they must not receive them into their fellowship where he reigned with dictatorial control. One should be cautious, therefore, when hearing others slander the good name of brethren with whom they disagree. Slander is an abominable sin that will end many in a devil's hell where they will receive their just reward for defaming the character of others (Pv 10:8,10,18; 1 Tm 3:11; see Rm 3:8). One should be warned about beating up on the sheep of God with malicious words. (4) **Does not receive the brethren:** The word "brethren" here may have specific reference to the traveling evangelists, or it may be generic in the sense that Diotrephes did not receive any brother. The dictatorial paranoia of Diotrephes is manifested in the fact that he did not want any brother in his sectarian party who might endanger the psychological hold he had over his group. In order to keep out competition, therefore, he had to keep out of the fellowship of his party those who would either teach against his sinful behavior or encourage the brethren to reject him from his position. (5) **Forbids those who would:** The extent to which Diotrephes controlled the disciples is manifested here. He had the power to intimidate members to reject any apostle or evangelist from coming to speak to his denominated group. Church leaders who behave in this manner over the sheep of God have become lords over the flock (See comments 1 Pt 5:1-4). They have forgotten that they will have to stand before the Chief Shepherd whose sheep they have stolen (See Rm 2:16; 14:10,12; 2 Co 5:10). (6) **Casts them out of the church:** Diotrephes ruled by intimidation. He ruled by threat of excommunication from the fellowship of the disciples. Any who would not conform to his wishes were threatened with disfellowship. Gaius may have been one of these members who was threatened by Diotrephes. The preceding practices of Diotrephes left these disciples in a very tense situation. It was such a tense situation that a letter was directed from the inspired hand of an apostle to correct it. We wish that John had written more. However, enough was written here to identify the nature of those church leaders who seek to be lords over the flock of God. We understand from John's character identification of Diotrephes that he loved to be first. Such a

desire will progressively lead to severing fellowship with his brethren with whom he would disagree. Loving to be first, therefore, is the ruin of those who would carry out such selfish ambition in the church.

#### IMITATE GOOD

**11 Do not follow what is evil:** The English word "mimic" is from the Greek word *mimos* that is used here. Christians must not mimic that which is evil, but that which is good (See Ps 37:27; Is 1:16; Ph 3:17; 4:9; 1 Th 1:6; 1 Pt 3:11; 1 Jn 3:10). John explains that what Diotrephes is doing is evil. **From God:** Those who follow after examples of good are of the nature of God who is love (1 Jn 2:29; 3:6-10; 4:7-16). **Not seen God:** Those who carry out their ungodly attitudes to do evil have not seen the nature of God. They do not understand the character of the God of love and compassion (1 Jn 3:6; see Mk 10:45). One who has never seen God by seeking to behave in a godly manner on earth will certainly never be in the presence of God in heaven. **12** Diotrephes manifested in his life that which was evil. His behavior was in contrast to that of Demetrius whom John here sets forth as an example of good for Gaius to follow (See 1 Tm 3:7). Others were giving witness to the goodness of Demetrius and his life that conformed to the nature of the truth of the gospel. John states that he and the other apostles also give their testimony to the character of Demetrius. Though John does not give us more identification of Demetrius, at least for the reassurance of Gaius, he is set forth as the one with whom Gaius must fellowship in these trying times. In such times of church controversy, those who are of the nature of the truth of the gospel, and thus, have seen God through their godly behavior, must seek out those who manifest goodness as Demetrius. It is often during times of church tension as described in this letter that the goodness of pure hearts is manifested. On the other hand, the evil of those who have wrong motives is also manifested (See comments 1 Co 11:19).

#### PLANS TO COME

**13,14 Many things to write:** It is evident that the situation among the disciples wherein Diotrephes had assumed dictatorial control was so grave that the apostle intended to write many things to correct the problem (See 2 Jn 12). However, John possibly decided to deal with this problem personally. Therefore, he began to write many things, but decided that this situation called for the presence of a Christ-sent apostle. If such were the case, then certainly Diotrephes would have been in a most uncomfortable situation in the presence of one who had the power of a Christ-sent apostle (See comments At 5:1-11; 13:6-11; 1 Co 5:5; 1 Tm 1:20; 2 Co 12:14 - 13:6). Christ-sent apostles had the power to unleash physical punishment from God on those who harmed the sheep of God. In this situation, it could be assumed that John had such in mind as he planned to

visit Gaius. **Peace to you:** Peace should come to the heart of Gaius in view of the fact that the apostle was coming (Compare 1 Pt 5:14; Ep 6:23). On the other hand, there was certainly no peace of mind for Diotrephes. **Our friends:** There were those in the company of John who were also known by Gaius. John

here seeks to bring comfort to the heart of Gaius by reaffirming the fellowship he maintains with the church. John also knew brethren who were disciples in the area of Gaius. Gaius must seek fellowship with those who are faithful. He closes by asking Gaius to greet them on his behalf.

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## The Letter Of Jude

### Author

The inspired writer of this New Testament letter is Jude, the brother of James and half brother of Jesus. The name "Jude" was a common Jewish name which means "renowned."

In the New Testament there are at least nine individuals who had the name "Jude" (See Mt 10:4; 13:55; Lk 3:33; 3:26; 3:30; 6:16; Jn 14:22; At 5:37; 9:11; 15:22; Jd 1). The name was used to refer to two of the Christ-sent apostles (Jn 14:22). The Jude who wrote this letter was the brother of the prominently known James of Jerusalem (At 15:13; Gl 1:19; 2:9). James was the son of Mary and Joseph after the birth of Jesus (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3). It is believed that this James was the author of the book of James. Jude, his brother, was the inspired writer of this book. Both were the half brothers of Jesus, since Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit.

### Date

In verses 14,15 Jude speaks of the coming of the Lord as an encouragement for his readers. The sense of his quotation of the prophecy of Enoch is that the coming of the Lord was imminent. The Holy Spirit certainly did not deceive either Jude or his readers into thinking that the Lord was coming in His final coming within their lifetime. Therefore, the coming of the Lord to which Jude refers in verses 14,15 was probably to the coming of the Lord in time in judgment upon national Israel. Because of Jude's similar message as 2 Peter, we would assume that both Peter and Jude wrote sometime in the middle or latter 60s, possibly between A.D. 65 to 67.

### Theme

The theme of this short letter is expressed in verse 3. Jude was about to write to his readers concerning the common salvation that we have in Christ. However, there seems to have been an urgent danger of apostasy. It was so urgent that the Holy Spirit changed the desires of Jude in order to deal with the apostasy. The apostasy about which Jude writes was at hand. His readers were dealing with those who arrogantly believed and behaved in a manner that was threatening the peaceful relationships that the disciples enjoyed with one another. Therefore, Jude writes in order to reveal that God will judge those who influence the church for evil. He thus writes to preserve the church for eternal life. The fact that Jude changed the theme of his message indicates that the subject of this letter is of great importance concerning the nature and fellowship of the church. The harsh nature of the letter indicates that God considers the fellowship of the church with great seriousness.

### Purpose

Arrogant religious teachers who had created a religious behavior after their own desires had come into the fellowship of the disciples. The origin of these individuals is not known, though some have speculated that these may be Judaeo-Gnostic teachers. Since John writes concerning the presence of antichrists among the disciples of the saints (1 Jn 2:22), Jude possibly writes to the same group. This group of false teachers could very well be Judaeo-Gnostics who had infiltrated the church, and thus, were denying the incarnation of Jesus as the Christ. They had accepted Jesus as a good teacher, but they denied the incarnation. They therefore denied the foundation upon which the gospel is based.

This letter is direct and leaves no doubt concerning the judgment that is awaiting false teachers who are of the nature that is described in this letter. In writing to reveal the sure judgment of apostate teachers, Jude also writes in order to encourage the righteous to maintain their faith. They must remain faithful in the midst of a movement of false religionists who have turned the grace of God into unrighteous behavior.