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COURSE NOTES

I, II, III JOHN & JUDE

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25 Lantana Lane, Maxwell, Texas 78656
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INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

Instructor: Russell Haffner

Biography:

Russell Haffner currently serves as the director of the WVBS Online Bible School. He graduated from the Southwest School of Bible Studies in 1993. He is also an alumnus of Texas A&M University where he majored in Architecture. He has served as a minister of the gospel for over 30 years. He has spoken on various lectureships and has held several gospel meetings. He has also published articles in numerous lectureship books.

Russell and his wife Dee are blessed with three children - Ross, John and Kati. Ross and John are both graduates of the Southwest School of Bible Studies and currently serve as ministers in the Lord's church. Kati is married to Tony Lopez who is also currently serving as a minister in the Lord's church.

FIRST JOHN
INTRODUCTION

I. Authorship of the Epistle

A. I want to make it clear that God is the author of this book, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). The writer whom God used to reveal this epistle was the apostle John.

B. The evidence for John as the human penman for this epistle is abundant and reliable.

C. Looking at historical documents the letter can almost be traced to John's very own hand.

D. Irenaeus formally names the apostle John as the author of First John in his work, *Against Heresies* (Book III, Chapter 1, Section 1), drawing upon a broader apostolic tradition protected by early church leaders like Papias and Polycarp, who were firsthand students of John.

II. John's Background

A. John was the son of Zebedee, who was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 1:20; Luke 5:10), and his mother, Salome, was one of the women who followed Jesus and was with Him at His crucifixion (Matthew 27:56).

B. John lived in Bethsaida (Luke 5:10; Join 1:44) and had a younger brother named James (Matthew 4:21).

C. He was probably first a disciple of John the baptizer and later became a follow of Jesus after the announcement made of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:35-39).

III. The Situation at the Time

A. John's epistle defends against the attacks of a religious movement known as the Gnostics.

1. The strongest kind of attack Satan can bring against the church is actually an internal one.

2. When the church begins to produce division rather than harmony, difficult times are coming on that congregation.

3. This was the case in the last half of the first century and even more so in the following two centuries.

4. The church had segments of Christians who were causing strife and division by their false teachings and beliefs.

5. There was a very destructive force during this time (and still today) known as Gnosticism.

B. Early stages of Gnosticism

1. The Gnostics felt they possessed special knowledge which was not known in the churches. Their name came from the Greek word, GNOSIS, meaning knowledge.

2. Gnostics believed in philosophical dualism: all matter is evil, and only spirit is good.

   a. They believed that man's physical body was inherently evil, but contained a trapped divine spirit.

   b. They believed that sin is merely ignorance, so simply acquiring knowledge would bring salvation with no requirements for moral obedience.

3. Some practical consequences of the Gnostic's beliefs:

   a. **Asceticism** - This was their belief of punishing the body to suppress its evil nature through:

      1) Forbidding of marriage.

      2) Fasting for long, extended periods.

      3) Vows of extreme poverty.

   b. **Antinomianism (Libertinism)** - This was their belief that because the body is inherently evil and distinct from the spirit, physical actions have no bearing on salvation; this led to unrestrained immoral behavior. They used the phrase "eat, drink, and be merry"—along with the philosophy behind it—to justify their rejection of moral laws.

c. **Elitist Perfectionism:**

1) Gnostics believed that their possession of hidden knowledge placed them entirely above sin, rendering it impossible for their spiritual selves to be defiled.

2) This caused them to look down on ordinary, “less knowledgeable” church members.

4. The Gnostics did not believe in a bodily resurrection, but believed that at death their spirits were liberated to enter the “spirit world.”

5. Key historical controversies about Jesus’s divinity and humanity:

a. Docetists - A major Gnostic branch that denied the physical humanity of Jesus, teaching that He was a purely spiritual being who only *appeared* to have a physical body.

b. Cerinthians - An early Gnostic group teaching that Jesus was just an ordinary human born to Mary and Joseph; they claimed the divine “Christ-spirit” descended on Him at baptism but departed before His crucifixion.

c. Ebionites - This was an extreme legalistic Jewish-Christian sect acting in an opposite extreme to Gnosticism, denying Jesus’s deity while affirming His physical humanity.

IV. The Purpose of John’s Letter

A. Instruction concerning true Christianity was desperately needed since there was a rising misguided interest in trying to merge Christianity with paganism. These false doctrines needed to be answered.

B. Nowhere else in the New Testament is the combination of faith, love and obedience so clearly brought out.

C. The inspired words of John revealed to them the four-fold reason for writing the letter:

1. That you may have joy (1 John 1:4).

2. That you may not sin (1 John 2:1).

3. That you might be on guard against error (1 John 2:26).

4. That you might know you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

V. The Letter's Destination and Date of Writing

A. The epistle was written to a group of Christians, likely in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

1. The specific audience is not explicitly named.

2. However, these Christians were facing challenges from false teachers and needed assurance of their salvation and encouragement to live a life of faith, love and obedience.

B. John's letter is believed to be sent from Ephesus around 90-95 A.D.

VI. The Relation of First John to John's Gospel Account

A. Both emphasize that Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully man (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1).

B. Both teach the importance of love, particularly love for one another, as a defining characteristic of disciples (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-8).

C. Both highlight the importance of living in truth (John 8:32; 14:6; 1 John 1:6).

D. Both elevate the importance of "the Word" (John 1:2; 1 John 1:1).

E. Both speak of fellowship with God and with one another as a key aspect of the Christian life (John 15:5; 1 John 1:3).

F. In both we find a contrast between light and darkness, life and death, and truth and lies (John 1:5; 1 John 1:5; John 5:24; 1 John 3:14; John 8:44; 1 John 2:22).

VII. John's letter provides a "six-way test" for these Christians to determine if they are truly walking in the light:

A. They must admit that they sin (1 John 1:8-10).

B. They must obey God's will (1 John 2:4).

C. They must imitate Christ (1 John 2:6).

D. They must love others (1 John 2:9).

E. They must hate the evils of this world (1 John 2:15-17).

F. They must live righteously (1 John 2:29).

VIII. Major Themes

A. Love and Fellowship

1. John highlights both God's love for humanity and the responsibility of Christians to love one another (1 John 3:18; 4:9-11).

2. John connects love for God with love for fellow Christians, emphasizing that true fellowship with God is expressed through love and unity within the Christian community (1 John 3:10-11; 4:11, 20-21).

3. Love is presented as a defining characteristic of true Christian faith and a distinguishing mark of believers (1 John 5:3).

B. Distinguishing True Believers from False Teachers

1. John addresses the presence of false teachers and antichrists—those who oppose Christ—who deny the true nature of Jesus Christ (1 John 2:18-22; 4:3).

2. The book provides criteria for discerning truth from error, and emphasizing the importance of recognizing and rejecting false doctrines.

3. It encourages Christians to test the spirits and to hold fast to the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:1).

C. Walking in the Light

1. John contrasts light and darkness, truth and error, and righteousness and sin (1 John 1:5-7).

2. Walking in the light means living according to God's truth, confessing sins, and obeying His commandments.

3. It also means separating oneself from the world and its evil influences.

D. The Assurance of Salvation

1. One of John's main purposes in First John is to give Christians assurance (1 John 5:13).

2. A feeling of assurance is crucial for all Christians.

   a. This is especially true for new converts.

   b. The ability to live the victorious Christian life depends upon this assurance.

3. While the Bible rejects the false teaching of "once saved always saved;" it supports the biblical doctrine of assurance.

4. There are four reasons for assurance given in this letter:

   a. The Holy Spirit dwells within the Christian (1 John 4:13).

   b. The Christian's confession of Christ (1 John 4:14-16).

   c. Love for the brethren (1 John 4:16-21).

   d. Obedience to the will of God (1 John 5:1-5).

E. The "sin leading to death" or "sin unto death" (KJV)

1. The phrase "sin leading to death" (1 John 5:16), is an expression that refers to sin so serious that one cannot recover from its effects.

2. The reference is not to a particular **act** of sin, but to a Christian's **attitude** toward his sin.

   a. Murder, adultery, homosexuality and all other sinful deeds can be forgiven when repentance and obedience take place (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

   b. However, John explains that Christians must be willing to both acknowledge their sins and obey the truth in order to receive forgiveness.

3. John shows that Christians can be cleansed from any sin when they repent, confess and pray for forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

4. Therefore, the sin that is fatal (“leading to death”) is the unconfessed sin. John is talking about deliberate disobedience and defiant refusal to repent.

5. Also, Christians can pray for God to forgive the sins of a brother who repents, but there should be no prayer made asking God to forgive a brother who refuses to repent of his sins (1 John 5:16-17).

IX. Key Verses

A. 1 John 1:6-10, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 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. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

B. 1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

C. 1 John 3:4, “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”

D. 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

E. 1 John 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

FIRST JOHN - OUTLINE

I. Introduction 1:1-4

II. God is Light 1:5-2:29

III. God is Love 3:1-5:12

IV. Conclusion 5:13-21

FIRST JOHN - EXPANDED OUTLINE

I. Introduction 1:1-4

A. Proof of the Manifestation of the Word 1:1-3

B. Purpose in Writing 1:4

II. God is Light 1:5-2:29

A. Conditions of Fellowship with God…… …… ……1:5-7

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D. Tests of the Christian 2:3-6

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F. Little Children, Fathers and Young Men Addressed 2:12-14

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III. God is Love 3:1-5:12

A. God's Love for Mankind 3:1-2

B. Origin and Characteristics of Sinful Conduct 3:3-12

C. Love and Hatred Contrasted 3:13-24

D. Spirit of Truth and Spirit of Error Contrasted 4:1-6

E. Brotherly Love Commanded 4:7-21

F. Tests of Faith and Love 5:1-12

IV. Conclusion 5:13-21

A. Additional Object in Writing 5:13-15

B. The Sin unto Death 5:16-17

C. Divine Assurances 5:18-21

FIRST JOHN EXPOSITION

I. INTRODUCTION 1:1-4

A. PROOF OF THE MANIFESTATION OF THE WORD 1:1-3

1:1 That which was from the beginning - John is referring to Christ and to His existence with the Father from eternity. In 1 John 2:13, John speaks of Christ as "Him who is from the beginning" (John 1:14; John 17:5).

a. The Divine nature of Christ has no beginning and no end; He has always existed (John 1:1, 14; Colossians 1:16-17).

b. The Human nature of Christ started when He was born on Earth.

"From the Beginning" actually means He already existed before time started.

John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Therefore, "from the Beginning" refers to the **beginning** of Jesus's earthly ministry and the preaching of the Gospel.

The Bible does not teach that Christ had a beginning in the sense of being created or coming into existence. The Bible teaches that He is eternal, uncreated, and outside of time. When 1 John 1:1 uses the phrase "That which was from the beginning," it is not describing a moment when Jesus was born or created. Instead, it mirrors the opening of John 1:1 ("In the beginning was the Word") and Genesis 1:1 ("In the beginning God"), meaning He already existed before time and creation ever started.

We should break down the true meaning of "the beginning" in this passage into two main points:

1. Christ's Eternal Nature (Before Time) - The Greek word for "was" in the phrase "was from the beginning" is in the imperfect tense (ĒN). **This signifies a continuous past existence.**

a. The Proclamation: When the "beginning" of the universe occurred, Jesus did not start; He already was.

b. The Bible explicitly presents Christ as existing before all creation: John 8:58: Jesus states, "Before Abraham was, I AM," claiming the

eternal, uncreated name of God. Colossians 1:17: “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” John 17:5: Jesus prays about the glory He shared with the Father “before the world began”

2. The Beginning of the Gospel age - The specific context of 1 John, the apostle is also referring to the beginning of Jesus’s earthly ministry and the preaching of the Gospel.

    a. Combating False Teachers: John wrote this letter to fight early Gnostic heresies claiming Jesus was just a phantom or spirit without a physical body.

    b. Eyewitness Testimony: By emphasizing “which we have heard, which we have seen... and our hands have handled,” John is proving that the eternal God physically stepped into human history. The apostles physically touched Him, verifying that the uncreated “Word of life” became a real, flesh-and-blood man.

The phrase “from the beginning” refers to eternity. The Bible teaches that Jesus’s human life started when He was born, but His divine identity as the Word has no beginning or end.

<u>Which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled</u> - Notice the increasing intensity of this proof.

a. This statement clearly refutes the Gnostic theory that Jesus never had a flesh-and-blood body but was only a spirit.

b. They refused to believe that God could ever lower Himself to take on human flesh and blood.

c. John is proclaiming that Jesus, whom he had personally known, was a real man living among men.

d. The Lord was not a mere influence, nor a shadowy phantom, but a living, vibrant, tangible person whose voice John had heard, whose body he had seen, and whom he had touched with his own hands.

> John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The phrase “we have looked upon” is aorist, indicative, middle tense in the original language. This indicates a calm, continuous contemplation of an object which remains before the viewer. Also inherent in the meaning of this word is the idea of contemplating with pleasure, looking with delight and finding satisfaction in the object being contemplated.

Concerning the Word of life - This part of the sentence begins in the neuter. This shows the subject is a “what” (the gospel) and is later personified as a “who” (Jesus Christ).

Please notice the names given in the Scriptures for the Gospel:

a. Word of life (Philippians 2:16).

b. Word of God (Acts 4:31; 6:2,7; 11:1; 13:5,7,44; 16:32; Philippians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 13:7; Revelation 1:2, 9; 6:9; 20:4).

c. Word of the Lord (Acts 8:25; 12:24; 13:49; 15:35; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).

d. Word of hearing - word preached (Hebrews 4:2).

e. Word of the kingdom (Matthew 13:19).

f. Word of the gospel (Acts 15:7; Colossians 1:5).

g. Word of His grace (Acts 14:3; 20:32).

h. Word of salvation (Acts 13:26).

i. Word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19).

j. Word (preaching) of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18).

k. Word of truth (2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:15).

l. Word of righteousness (Hebrews 5:13).

m. Form of sound (health-giving) words (2 Timothy 1:13).

1:2 The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness - This is a parenthetical statement explaining verse 1.

And declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - "That eternal life" refers to the Eternal One, Jesus Christ (compare John 11:25).

1:3 That which we have seen and heard we declare to you - John underscores the permanence of his eyewitness testimony by using the perfect indicative active tense for both "seen" and "heard." Because the Greek perfect tense denotes a past event with enduring consequences, it shows that God's message was easy for people to understand, and its impact lasts forever.

That you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ - Those who are true believers who have obeyed God's plan of salvation dwell in Christ and share a fellowship that unites the entire body of Christ. This fellowship is neither vague nor sentimental; it requires:

a. Obedience: Keeping the commands of Christ.

b. Faithfulness: Holding to the teachings of the apostles.

Abandoning apostolic truth cuts a person off from fellowship with both the Father and the Son.

B. PURPOSE IN WRITING 1:4

1:4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full - Many different sources can produce partial joy. However, the joy that comes from faith in the Son of God is total: it is complete in its scope and flawless in its character. This joy can be full only when Jesus and His gospel are shared with both the saved and the lost.

II. GOD IS LIGHT 1:5-2:29

A. CONDITIONS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD 1:5-7

1:5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light - This is not the same as:

a. "God is **the** light," or

b. "God is **a** light,"

c. But simply, “God **is** light.”

It describes God’s essence! The key to this is that “light” always stands for something good and positive, never for something evil.

This phrase (“God is light”) emphasizes:

a. God’s splendor and glory: Light represents the brilliant majesty of God. There is nothing so glorious as a blaze of light piercing the darkness.

b. God’s self-revealing nature: Light is inherently visible and exposes reality. There is nothing secretive, shy, or underhanded about God.

c. God’s purity and holiness: Light contains no darkness, meaning there is no hidden evil or sin in God’s character.

d. God’s divine guidance: One of the core functions of light is to show the way and direct our steps.

e. Man’s exposure in His presence: Just as physical light exposes hidden flaws; human imperfections are made completely obvious in the pure light of God’s presence.

<u>And in Him is no darkness at all</u> - The phrase, “no darkness at all” is a very emphatic double negative. The idea is, “no, not even one tiny particle of darkness.” Throughout the New Testament darkness stands for the exact opposite of the Christian life.

Darkness:

a. Stands for a life without Christ. It represents the life a man had before he met Christ or the life he lives if he strays away from Him (compare: 1 John 2:8; Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5; John 8:12; 1 Peter 2:9).

b. Is hostile to the light - they are natural enemies. Darkness seeks to obliterate light (John 1:5).

c. Stands for the ignorance of life apart from Christ (John 12:35-46).

d. Stands for the chaos of life without God. Without God's light the world is a chaotic mess in which life has neither order, sense, nor survival (compare: 2 Corinthians 4:6).

e. Stands for the immorality of a life without Christ (compare: Romans 13:12; John 3:19).

f. Is unfruitful. No fruit of the Spirit can grow in darkness (Ephesians 5:11).

g. Is connected with hate and an absence of love (1 John 2:9-11).

h. Is the abode of the enemies of Christ and the final goal of those who will not accept Him (Ephesians 6:12; 2 Peter 2:9; Jude 1:13).

1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him - This is the first of five conditional ("If") statements in this chapter (verses 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10). In the original Greek language, the grammar here describes choices that we actively make. In other words, these verses are about our own personal behavior and actions, not things that happen to us automatically.

And walk in darkness - The definition for "walk" is to walk about, to conduct one's life. The Christian walk is the direct opposite of the teaching of the Gnostics. They viewed life in darkness as being perfectly consistent with the evil body - all physical things being evil. "Darkness" stands for several things in the Scriptures:

Ignorance	John 12:35
Immorality	John 3:19
Unfaithfulness	Ephesians 5:11
Separation from God	Matthew 25:30
Hostility to light	John 1:5
Lovelessness	1 John 2:9

Types of darkness:

Mental	Ephesians 4:18
Natural	Romans13:12
Material	Ephesians 4:18
Prophetic	Joel 2:2
Eternal	Jude 1:13
Spiritual	1 John 1:5

We lie - This comes from the Greek word (PSEUDOMAI) meaning, "to deceive, speak falsely, speak deceitfully."

Four times in this letter John bluntly accuses false teachers of being liars:

a. In 1 John 1:6, those who say they have fellowship with Christ, and continue to walk in darkness are liars.

b. In 1 John 2:4, John is stating very clearly the truth that the man who says one thing with his lips and another thing with his life is a liar. The person who professes to love Christ but deliberately disobeys Him is guilty of a lie.

c. In 1 John 2:22, the man who denies Jesus is the Christ is a liar. Jesus asks, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:13).

d. In 1 John 4:20, the man who says he loves God and hates his brother is a liar. If there is bitterness in a man's heart toward any other, it is proof he does not really love God.

Followers of the Bible must remember that simply believing right doctrine is never a substitute for living a righteous life (compare John 3:20–21; 8:12; 11:9–10; 12:35–36, 46; 1 John 2:11).

And do not practice the truth - Truth is not something that exercises only the mind, it is something which exercises the whole personality and being.

> Truth is not only the discovery of abstract information, it is a way of life. It is not only thinking, it is acting! Christianity is to be followed; the Bible is a book to be obeyed. It is possible for intellectual understanding and moral failure to go hand in hand. For the faithful Christian, truth is something that is first discovered and then obeyed.

A Christian's relationship to truth. A Christian must:

Hold to it.	Romans 1:18
Obey it.	Romans 2:8
Walk according to it.	3 John 1:4
Not resist it.	2 Timothy 3:8; James 1:18-20
Not wander from it.	James 5:19
Love it.	2 Thessalonians 2:10

1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light - The Greek word for "walk" in this passage (PERIPATEŌ) is the same as found in verse 6. The present tense shows it must be a continuous walk, "If we **keep on walking** in the light."

Those who are walking in darkness do not know where they are going and are unable to chart their course. They stumble against one another and fall into confusion. On the other hand, those who walk in the light can see one another clearly and avoid dangers.

But where spiritual light is concerned (Jeremiah 10:23) much more than this is obvious. Those who live in the light in which God dwells are not only kept from getting into one another's way, but they actively enjoy fellowship with each other because each enjoys fellowship with God Himself.

The emphasis here is not:

How **far** we walk, or

How **fast** we walk, but

Where we walk (*in the light*).

We have fellowship with one another - The fellowship of Christians is a visible sign and proof of fellowship with God Himself.

And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin - This positively establishes:

a. The reality of the body and blood of Jesus.

b. The suffering and death which He experienced on the cross.

c. The efficacy (effectiveness and value) of the blood which He shed.

"Cleanses" - The Greek word translated as "cleanses" (KATHARIZŌ) is present tense. In other words, this is a continual process which matches the Christian's continual "walking" in the light.

"all sin" - Notice this is **all** sin! This cleansing would include sins of every type and kind. All sins can be grouped into two broad categories:

a. Sins of commission — doing things the Scriptures teach us not to do.

b. Sins of omission — failing to do the good things the Scriptures command us to do.

B. SIN AND FORGIVENESS.....1:8-10

1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves - Some Gnostic would foolishly say, “What is it to us if the blood of Jesus is not available to cleanse us from sin? We have no sin!” Others would claim that because they have the Holy Spirit they have gone beyond good and evil and have reached a stage of spiritual development where moral principles no longer apply. In this they are self-deceived.

And the truth is not in us - This is a severe condemnation. Notice what is said about Satan:

> John 8:44, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because **there is no truth in him**. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”

1:9 If we confess our sins - “Confess” is present tense meaning to keep on confessing. The Greek word here for “confess” (HOMOLOGEŌ) literally means “to say the same thing, to speak together.”

> The illustration here is of a conversation between God and the Christian sinner. The sinner finally sees the truth of his condition and then confesses that God is right!
>
> The Christian’s relationship with God is a personal one. An audience with Him can be had at anytime and anywhere in prayer.

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins - The point made here is that God, because He is righteous, always keeps His word. He promises to forgive Christians of sin when they repent and pray for forgiveness. God has always promised to be merciful to those who seek His forgiveness in the proper way.

> Confession to God should be personal and specific. Saying, “**If** I have sinned,” is not a complete confession. Our confession should be as specific as possible.

And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness - Sin stains our soul, but God can wipe the slate clean!

> God forgives confessed sins, based on a Christian’s walk in the light and penitent heart. He will also forgive sins of which the Christian is unaware (verse 7) if they are walking in the light. This means, having a penitent heart, the Christian who is walking in the light will continually seek to learn

how to better please God and will always be ready and willing to make the necessary adjustments in his life.

1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar - Why? Because God said, "all have sinned." Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." To deny that we have sin is to say God is wrong and that we can simply get by on our own merits.

This is another example of the false doctrine of the Gnostics. They claimed they could continue in sinful actions with their bodies while keeping their spirits clean. As a result, they said they had no sin.

And His word is not in us - This emphasizes the importance of obeying God's word.

Jesus told the Jewish leaders in John 5:38, "But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe."

He said to them in John 8:37, "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you."

In this, John condemns the person who claims he is so far advanced in knowledge and spiritual life that sin no longer has significance for him.

The difference between the believer and the non-believer is not that the believer never sins, but that he gets up after falling and continues walking toward the light.

C. JESUS OUR ADVOCATE 2:1-2

2:1 My little children, these things I write to you - "Children" is used as a term of love and tenderness, with no reference to actual age intended (see also verses 12 and 28).

In verses 13 and 18 the Greek word (PAIDION) is used to refer to those who are younger in the faith.

So that you may not sin - Since Jesus lived a sinless life we would be foolish to think a life of sin would glorify Him. Only a life of obedience will please Him.

What does this mean for the Gnostic teaching that the body is free to sin because the soul supposedly remains pure?

And if anyone sins, we have - "We have" is present tense literally meaning, "we keep on having."

Jesus is the ever-present remedy for sin—for the individual sins we commit out of weakness, ignorance, or carelessness.

An advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous - "Advocate" refers to someone who speaks on another person's behalf, like an attorney or lawyer defending a client. Jesus is the Christian's helper, comforter, and representative before the Father (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

Notice that John calls Him "Jesus Christ the righteous." If Jesus were not righteous, He could not serve as the advocate for Christians, because He Himself would need someone to intercede for Him. Only a sinless and righteous Savior is qualified to stand before the Great Judge and plead on behalf of others.

These verses teach not only the **presence** of sin in the life of a believer, but also the **provision** God has made for the forgiveness of sin.

2:2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins - "Propitiation" comes from the Greek word (HILASMOS) meaning, "to satisfy, appease, render favorable, to cover, to conciliate." The idea is that Jesus has satisfied the wrath of God by being the sacrifice (covering) for our sins. This is present tense meaning Christ keeps on being the propitiation.

And not for ours only but also for the whole world - This is the opportunity for salvation for all mankind. This verse completely destroys the Calvinistic doctrine of "Limited Atonement." [For additional information please see the appendices - LIMITED ATONEMENT.]

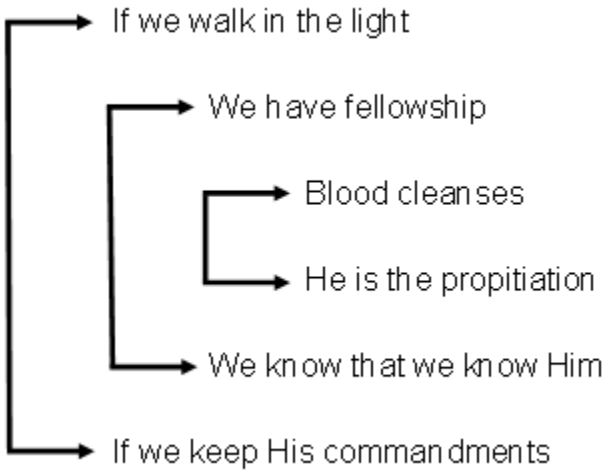
The Bible teaches that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for all. If the gospel is not for all, why did Jesus commission the apostles to go out and teach all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-16)? God's desire is for all to be saved and Jesus Christ gave Himself a ransom for all to pay the price to free all the world (all sinners) from the bondage of sin (1 Timothy 2:4-6).

Furthermore, the blood of Christ can wash away anyone's sin when they are willing to walk in the light of Jesus Christ and to obey His commandments (1 John 1:7). The Bible teaches that the atoning blood of Jesus makes it possible for all to be saved. All who are willing to come to Him in obedience can be saved. God loved the world and gave His son for the sins of the world and whosoever will believe and obey Him will have eternal life (John 3:16-17). The blood of Jesus is not limited to a few. It is available for all.

D. TESTS OF THE CHRISTIAN 2:3-6

2:3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments - Notice the close tie between this verse and 1 John 1:7.

> 1 John 1:7, "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."
>
> 1 John 2:2-3, "And **He Himself is the propitiation** for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by this **we know that we know Him**, **if we keep His commandments**."



"If we keep" means "to guard" or "to keep for oneself." It carries the idea of holding firmly to something and carefully preserving it in one's mind and life.

> Grammatically, this is a third-class conditional statement, literally meaning, "if we **continue keeping His commandments**" (compare John 14:15; Titus 1:16).
>
> The Gnostics claimed to possess special knowledge of God the Father. However, since the knowledge of God is revealed through Christ, a person cannot truly know the Father without knowing the Son. Therefore, those who claim to know God demonstrate the reality of that knowledge through their obedience to Christ.

2:4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him - This beginning phrase is also used in verses 6 and 9.

We must always emphasize the importance of matching what we profess with how we live. As the saying goes, “Many people can talk the talk, but few walk the walk.” We should strive to be among those few.

The verbs are in the present tense in this verse, “He who **keeps on** saying I know Him, and **keeps on** not keeping His commandments, **keeps on** being a liar, and the truth **keeps on** not being in him.”

John addresses two types of Gnostics here:

a. Some, especially the Greeks, saw God as an intellectual exercise only.

They could say, “I know god,” without feeling any obligation to that god at all.

b. Others claimed to have had an emotional or mystical experience and would say, “I am in God, and God is in me.”

They, too, had not “seen God” in terms of obedience to His commandments at all.

John shows that the only way we can demonstrate our love for God is through obedience to Him.

Intellectual understanding and emotional experience are not neglected in the gospel, but they must be expressed in action for faith to be complete (James 2:20; compare 1 John 1:6).

2:5 <u>But whoever keeps His word</u> - “Word” is used here as a synonym for “commandments.” Just as our knowledge of Him is to be tested by our obedience, so is our love for Him. It is the same test which proves both (see 1 John 5:1-3).

<u>Truly the love of God is perfected in him</u> - “Perfected” means, “to bring to a goal, to perfect.” Sin is just the opposite – it has no perfection because it has no good end, no good goal, no good aim. Why? Because sin is a transgression that wanders from its aim, it “misses the mark” (HAMARTIA).

True love for God is not expressed in special knowledge, sentimental language or imagined mystical experience, but in obedience.

<u>By this we know that we are in Him</u> - The proof of our love for God is loyalty shown through obedience.

We must continually work on growing in love for God and for our fellow human beings. When you find yourself feeling hatred or dislike toward someone, sincerely pray for them—it is difficult to continue hating someone you are sincerely praying for.

2:6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked - Walking in love is dealt with in great detail in John 15:1-17.

> John 15:10, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

The Greek word (OPHEILŌ) that is translated as "ought" in this context is in the present indicative form. It carries the sense of being under moral obligation—something one must do. It is not presented as a suggestion or option, but as a necessity or duty.

E. COMMANDMENTS OLD AND NEW.....2:7-11

2:7 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you - There are two main Greek words used in the New testament for "new."

a. NEOS - new in respect to time; that which has recently come into existence.

b. KAINOS - new with respect to quality, not time (used here).

c. Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between these words. [See Richard Trench's book, *Synonyms of the New Testament* for a full discussion.]

But an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning - The word "brethren" shows this is addressed to Christians, so then the word "beginning" refers to the beginning of this Christian age (compare 1 John 3:11; John 13:34-35).

2:8 Again, a new commandment I write to you - If "new" it is new compared to what? John 13:34 gives us the answer to our question (also compare John 3:16 with 1 John 3:16).

> Jesus said in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; **as I have loved you**, that you also love one another."

Which thing is true in Him and in you - This phrase not only expresses that the commandment is true, but it also states that the newness of the commandment to love was actually manifested (revealed) in Christ.

Because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining - This Greek phrase is present, indicative, middle. In other words, the process has already begun and continues as a result of evangelism (compare John 3:18-21; 8:12; Matthew 5:14).

2:9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now - No one can rightly claim to love God while defining that love as only an inward attitude that is invisible to others. Love is demonstrated through action.

> The two commandments: (1) love for God and (2) love for one's brother, are like two sides of the same coin; each is essential to the other.

2:10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him - There are two possible meanings here:

a. If we love our brother, there is nothing in us which causes others to stumble or

b. There is nothing in us which causes us to stumble.

The latter is more likely the meaning as love makes us able to make progress in our spiritual life whereas, hatred makes any progress impossible (compare John 11:9-10).

2:11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes - When one has hatred in his heart, his powers of judgment are obscured and he cannot see the issues clearly.

His existence	-	in darkness.
His activity	-	walks in darkness.
His state	-	does not know where he is going (he is blinded by the darkness).

No one is fit to pass judgment on anything while harboring hatred in his heart. Likewise, no one can rightly guide his own life when hatred is in control.

F. LITTLE CHILDREN, FATHERS, YOUNG MEN ADDRESSED 2:12-14

2:12 I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you - The mention of fathers, young men and children (verses 12-13) is to be understood as Christians somewhere in their spiritual growth.

Children	-	recent converts.
Young men	-	those who have reached maturity and possess greater spiritual strength in the Lord.
Fathers	-	those who had been in Christ the longest and had, therefore, attained the greater spiritual growth.

For His name's sake - What does this mean?

a. This means "on the basis of His name." God the Father forgives sin on account of Christ's name and because of His advocacy for us (1 John 2:1).

b. This also means acting in a way that is consistent with the character, will, and revealed nature of Christ (Psalm 23:3; 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 101:21; 143:11; Jeremiah 14:7, 11).

2:13 I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning - The Greek in this section is perfect tense. It literally means, "you came to know and now know, Him who is from the beginning."

Just as fathers in a natural family are more mature and experienced because of their age, so in the church there are those who are likewise more mature and seasoned in experience than other Christians.

I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one - The phrase "you have overcome" is in the perfect active indicative form, showing that they have already won the victory and that the results of that victory continue to be true (compare Romans 8:37).

I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father - This is also perfect, indicative, active meaning that they had come to know the Father and still know Him (compare Hebrews 8:11).

2:14 I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning - "I have written" is expressed from the viewpoint of the reader, whereas "I write" in verses 12 and 13 is from the viewpoint of the writer. This is a repeated assurance of spiritual security.

I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one - Their strength came from their study of, and obedience to, God's word (Colossians 2:16-17).

> We must study our Bible! It is critical if we expect to overcome and have the victory in Christ.

This passage (1 John 2:12-14) sets out God's gifts to all men in Jesus Christ.

They are the gifts of:

a. Forgiveness through Jesus Christ,

b. Increasing knowledge of God and

c. Victorious strength.

G. LOVE OF THE WORLD FORBIDDEN 2:15-17

2:15 Do not love the world - The term "world" is used in different ways in Scripture. The "world" that God loves refers to humanity (John 3:16), while the "world" we are forbidden to love refers to the system of evil in this present age. This is the realm of evildoers who are opposed to God.

Or the things in the world - The meaning is, "Do not love the world, no, nor anything that may be in it." The parable of the Prodigal Son would apply here (Luke 15:11-32). Also compare Matthew 6:24; Romans 8:5; James 4:4; 2 Corinthians 6:17-18.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him - No man can love worldly things and love the Father also, for God has condemned such things and commanded His children to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

> The only effective antidote to the poison of worldliness is to have one's heart so filled with the Father's love that there is no room for any love that is not compatible with it.

2:16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh - The word "flesh" does not refer to skin, muscles, and tissue; rather, it is often used in the darker sense found in Paul's writings to describe the source of sinful desires (see Galatians 5:16–24; Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 2:18; 2 Peter 2:18). The lusts of the flesh are expressed in the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21).

The “lust of the flesh” refers to evil desires that originate in the flesh and are expressed through it. To be governed by the desires of the flesh is to evaluate everything in this world by purely material standards. It is to:

a. Live a life dominated by the senses,

b. Be gluttonous with food,

c. Be consumed by luxury,

d. Be a slave to pleasure,

e. Be lustful and lacking in morals,

f. Be selfish in the use of possessions,

g. Disregard all spiritual values and

h. Fully satisfy your material desires without restraint.

The lust of the eyes - These are desires that are awakened through the things that are seen. This is the attitude that:

a. Can see nothing without wishing to have it,

b. Puts on display the things they have.

c. Believes happiness is to be found in the things which money can buy and the eyes can see.

d. Has no values other than the material.

And the pride of life - To the Greeks, this referred to a person who claims possessions or achievements that do not truly belong to him in order to exalt himself.

His speech is marked by constant boasting about things he does not actually possess, and his life is spent trying to impress others with his own false or exaggerated importance.

Compare the fall of mankind (Genesis 3:4) and the temptation of Jesus by Satan (Matthew 4:1–11). In both cases, all the avenues listed in 1 John 2:16 were involved. The first battle was lost, but the second battle was won.

In the Garden (Genesis 3:1-6)	**1 John 2:16**	The temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11)
Eat forbidden fruit	Lust of Flesh	Command stones to become bread
Saw the tree was good for food	Lust of the Eyes	All the kingdoms of the world
Be like God knowing good and evil	Pride of Life	Throw yourself - the angels will bear You up

Is not of the Father but is of the world - These evil things did not come from God!

2:17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it - The Greek here is present, indicative, middle that literally means, "it is in the process of passing away."

This process is in operation at this present time and will continue until the present evil age is no more. Compare Hebrews 1:10-12; Psalms 39:6; 103:15-16.

but he who does the will of God abides forever - The man of the world is doomed to disappointment, while the man of God is assured of everlasting joy (compare Matthew 6:24, 33).

H. WARNINGS AGAINST ANTICHRIST 2:18-29

2:18 Little children, it is the last hour - The word "hour" is translated as "time" in the King James Version. There are three words in the Greek language for "time":

a. CHRONOS - refers to chronological, quantitative, and linear time, such as time measured by a clock.

b. KAIROS - This "time" refers to qualitative, opportune time—a critical or "right" moment.

c. HŌRA - This "time" refers to a certain definite time (like the seasons that are fixed by natural law.

HŌRA is the word used here.

This word designates a definite period of time - this period being the last in succession as determined by God.

It is, therefore, the Christian dispensation or age. The absence of the article "the" in Greek supports this understanding, rather than referring to literal clock time.

> Bible history is divided into three ages (or dispensations) - the Patriarchal, the Mosaical and the Christian. In each of these dispensations of time God has set forth certain specific requirements for His people in worship and service to Him.
>
> > The Patriarchal Age, or Patriarchal Dispensation, gets its name from the father of the family or tribe. The term "patriarch" means "father." Under this system, the patriarch served as prophet, priest, and ruler. He directed the affairs of his family both religiously and politically. God spoke to the head of the family, and he, in turn, communicated God's will to the members of the family.
> >
> > During the Mosaic Dispensation, the Jews had their own written law, which God provided through Moses. in the Mosaic Age, God dealt with the nation of Israel through the law given by Moses. The law governed both the religious and civil life of the Jews and included commandments, sacrifices, and ordinances that they were required to obey. God revealed His will through the written law and through prophets whom He sent to instruct His people.
> >
> > The Christian Age extends from Pentecost in the book of Acts, chapter 2, until the Lord's final coming. Under this dispensation, Christians must obey Christ and the teachings recorded for them in the New Testament. Everything done in religious matters must be authorized by the New Testament (Colossians 3:17).

<u>And as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour</u> - "Antichrist" can refer to either one who comes "instead of" Christ or one who "opposes" Christ. In the Greek, "Antichrist" is shown to be a quality or category, not a specific person or group.

Antichrist is not so much a person as a principle, the principle which is actively opposed to Christ and which may well be thought of as being exemplified in those individuals, in every generation, who have proven themselves to be blatant opponents of God and His Son (compare Matthew 24:5,24-27; Acts 20:29; 2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Peter 2:1).

The phrase “is coming” means “shall come.” The idea is that of “springing up”—they are beginning to appear or arise.

2:19 <u>They went out from us</u> - They had been a part of the church.

<u>But they were not of us</u> - They were not of the same belief or doctrine.

It appears that John is referring here to the Gnostics of the first century.

<u>But they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us</u> - It could be that they were never truly converted to Christianity. Some go through the motions of obedience to the gospel, but not “from the heart.”

At first, there may be no way for the church to know a person’s heart. Such individuals may appear sincere when they are baptized, but their true character only becomes evident when they later turn against the church through their actions and false doctrines. By their fruits, their true feelings are revealed (compare Matthew 7:16–20).

This is not to suggest that a person cannot depart from the faith they once believed. A Christian can fall from faithfulness and be lost (Romans 11:22; 1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:12; 1 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 4:11; 2 Peter 3:17).

<u>But they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us</u> - The phrase, “made manifest” means, “brought to light, revealed.”

John not only records that they left the fellowship, but also recognizes a purpose behind their departure. They chose to leave on their own, but their separation also served God’s purpose of making their true nature visible. Their leaving exposed what they really were—it “unmasked” them. What is false or counterfeit cannot remain hidden forever.

2:20 <u>But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things</u> - The “anointing” is used figuratively and comes from the ancient practice of pouring oil on the heads of those who were to act in the service of the Lord (Exodus 29:7; Leviticus 8:12; 21:10; 1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Kings 1:39).

The “anointing” in this verse refers to either the miraculous gifts given to the first century Christians by the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 8:18), or the necessary information given to the Christians through the inspired teachings of the apostles.

The bottom line is that they received the truth of God's word with which they could defeat these false teachers. Today we must use this same truth, as revealed in the Bible, to defeat error.

2:21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth - He is explaining that they already know the truth, therefore, they should compare the truth they have received with what they are hearing from the false teachers.

2:22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son? - To deny Jesus is indeed to be the master of lies, for to do so is to lose the entire faith and the knowledge which He alone makes possible.

In this statement, John is directly attacking the false doctrine of the Gnostics.

2:23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also - This is a restatement of verse 22. God and Christ are two distinct persons, but they are one in divine nature. Therefore, to reject one is to reject the other.

We must not view the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as "attributes" of God, for each of these three Persons in the Godhead "are called God." So, you see the three Personages in the Godhead are not attributes of God, but they each have all the attributes of God. The Bible tells us there is only one God, and yet there is distinctly God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit.

There is only one essence of God (Deity), but there are three Persons within that essence. The Godhead means three distinct Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one distinct God. To deny one is to deny all!

The second half of this verse ("he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also") is not found in some Greek manuscripts, which is why certain translations leave it out. However, it does not conflict with the teaching of the rest of the New Testament. Therefore, including it does not cause harm, as it still agrees with biblical truth and can be retained as a supporting expression.

2:24 Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning - The word "that" is referring to the truth, the gospel.

If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father - In the Greek, "heard" is aorist indicative active, meaning "to have heard," with the idea of having received and accepted what was heard.

The active voice is significant in that it shows that one is continually remaining ("abiding") in the Father and Son through faith and obedience.

This means we must keep ourselves in the truth. This is a direct contradiction of Calvinism's "Once saved always saved" doctrine.

Truth keeps us in fellowship (see John 15:1-10).

2:25 And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life - This is the ultimate promise! The reward is not temporary; it is eternal life. It is given to those who remain faithful until death. It is not received in this present world, but in the life to come, when earthly things have passed away.

John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

2:26 These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you - This is a summary of this section directed to his "little children" (compare 1 John 2:1).

To "deceive" a person means to mislead them or cause them to turn away from the truth. There were many deceivers in the world who were so skilled in their false reasoning that those who were uninformed were easily led astray. For this reason, John wrote this warning to the disciples.

2:27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you - The "anointing" here is the same as verse 20.

The "anointing" refers either to the miraculous gifts given to first-century Christians through the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:18), or to the truth taught to them through the inspired apostles.

In either case, the main point is the same. They had received God's truth, which enabled them to resist false teachers. Today, we must rely on the same truth revealed in the Bible to overcome error.

And you do not need that anyone teach you - This means that Christians should not listen to the doctrines invented by uninspired men. We must always depend on the inspired teaching of the apostles as revealed in the Scriptures.

but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him - John is telling them they already have all the necessary knowledge needed for salvation.

> 2 Peter 1:3, “As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.”

2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears - This is a clear reference to the second coming of Christ, which may be at any time.

we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming - “Confidence” comes from the Greek word (PARRHĒSIA) meaning, “speaking everything with openness and boldness.”

> This word originally meant speaking openly and was used in political life. It later came to describe honesty and confidence, especially between friends.
>
> Philo (a Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria around the first century AD) used it to describe a slave who could speak freely and confidently to his master because he had a clear conscience.
>
> In the same way, a person who has been cleansed from sin and continues in love can speak freely and confidently to God, who is both his Master and the ruler of the whole world.
>
> > 2 Timothy 1:7-8, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.”

“Ashamed” - The Greek word here (AISCHUNOMAI) is aorist, subjunctive, passive and means, “to be put to shame, to be made ashamed.” The original idea was “to grow pale, to change color because of shame.” It is used to emphasize the effect of Christ’s coming on those who are unprepared to meet Him.

2:29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him - The Lord is righteous and therefore can only produce righteous offspring. Here the disciples are being encouraged to honor their family identity by living righteously (compare Psalm 11:7; Romans 11:22).

The only way a person can show that he is abiding in Christ is through the righteousness of his life. What a person professes will always be confirmed or disproved by what he practices.

III. GOD IS LOVE 3:1-5:12

A. GOD'S LOVE FOR MANKIND 3:1-2

3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! - "Behold" is used to get the attention of the readers and to help them contemplate this truth.

"What manner" - John wants to emphasize to his readers the nature and greatness of God's love. His love was so great that He demonstrated it by giving them the opportunity for salvation and the highest possible honor—welcoming them into His divine family as His children.

> It is like a very wealthy king taking a poor and humble man out of deep poverty and making him an heir to the royal estate, though even this illustration only faintly compares to what God has done.

Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him - John tells these Christians that the people of the world do not recognize them for who they truly are: children of God. In the same way, the world did not recognize Jesus for who He was, and is, the Son of God.

3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him - John begins this verse with the word "beloved." He uses this term, much like the phrase "little children" (1 John 2:1, 12–13, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21), as an expression of his affection for them.

> John is referring to how Christians will appear after the coming of Christ. He says that what Christians will be like has not yet been revealed. However, he explains that when Jesus returns, Christians will be like Him.
>
> > Remember, John had seen the resurrected Jesus, so Christ's form when He returns must, in some way, be different from His resurrected body. Perhaps Jesus' body was changed when He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9), and it has not been fully revealed what this glorified body is like in its spiritual form. We know that Christians will be given a spiritual body for heaven (1 Corinthians 15:44), but we do not know all the details concerning this spiritual body.

for we shall see Him as He is - John explains that when this event occurs, their imperfect understanding will pass away in the perfect knowledge of Him. They will no longer be (just as He is no longer) subject to death (compare Philippians 3:20–21).

B. ORIGIN & CHARACTERISTICS OF SINFUL CONDUCT.....3:3-12

3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure - The Greek word for "hope" (ELPIS) in this verse means, "desire, expectation and patiently waiting for the fulfillment."

"Purifies" - The Greek word for "purifies" (HAGNIZŌ) means, "to make clean (figuratively), to sanctify (ceremonially or morally)." The Greek here is present tense meaning, "keeps on purifying" (compare 1 John 1:7).

This passage shows:

a. Salvation is conditional,

b. The necessity of abstaining from every form of impurity,

c. Encouragement to faithfulness that hope provides and

d. Our example for purity is Jesus Himself.

3:4 Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness - In the Greek, "commits" means "the one continuing to commit."

"Sin" literally means "to miss the mark or target." The idea is to veer away (or deviate) from what is right. "Lawlessness" is a transgression of the law. It refers to failing to conform to the law, whether through disobedience or by failing to meet its demands. There should be no doubt that we are under a law today (the law of Christ; Galatians 6:2).

> The Gnostics taught that their "superior knowledge" made them immune to the demands of the law and that God did not, in their view, count sin against them even when their conduct was in conflict with God's law (compare Romans 4:15; 1 John 2:16; 5:17).

3:5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin - The phrase "take away" comes from the Greek word (AIRŌ), meaning "to take away or remove completely." The word carries the idea of a burden or load being lifted so that it no longer crushes the one upon whom it rests.

Here it signifies the lifting and carrying away of sins so that they are no longer upon us.

It is aorist subjunctive active, indicating a “once-for-all” action in which the Lord, through the once-for-all offering of Himself, accomplished His purpose, and its effectiveness stands forever.

“He was manifested” — This is the reason Jesus came, lived, died, and was resurrected: to take away sin (compare Matthew 1:21; John 3:17; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:22–23).

Titus 2:13-14, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

3:6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him - A person cannot “abide” in Christ unless he first comes into Christ. In Galatians 3:27 Paul states, “For as many of you as were baptized **into** Christ have put on Christ.” When one continues in that faithful relationship it can be said that he “abides in Him.” However, if a man continues to live a life of sin it is proof that he does not really know or truly understand Christ.

3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous - This is a positive declaration that character and conduct cannot be separated. We are righteous when our actions demonstrate our righteousness. This is a matter of lifestyle, as opposed to mere “knowledge,” just as in James chapter 2. God did not want them deceived into believing that their actions do not really matter. Knowledge alone is not enough. True biblical faith is shown in action (works of obedience; James 2:14–26).

3:8 He who sins is of the devil - This is a strong and direct statement that leaves little room for ambiguity. John is not speaking about an occasional failure or struggle with sin, but about a settled pattern of life.

The term “sins” refers to a continual lifestyle of sin—choosing sin as the normal direction of one’s conduct rather than a turning away from it. In that sense, John draws a sharp contrast between two realms of influence: those who belong to God, and those who are aligned with the devil.

This means that a life characterized by ongoing, unrepentant sin shows spiritual alignment with the devil, who is described as the originator and promoter of sin. It is not that Christians never sin, but that they do not live in sin as their settled identity or direction. The

point is about belonging and direction: a life dominated by sin reflects the devil's influence, while a life marked by righteousness reflects belonging to God.

> Jesus said in John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."
>
> Romans 6:16, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"

For the devil has sinned from the beginning - Satan is the originator of sin. The phrase "from the beginning" refers to the beginning of mankind on earth. John is here concerned specifically with the devil's first attack upon humanity, as the surrounding context indicates.

> The devil did not create any man, but when a person imitates the devil, he becomes like a child of the devil, as if he were his offspring.

For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil - The "works of the devil" not only include sin itself, but also the consequences of sin—pain, sorrow, misery, and death. The eventual triumph over death will be realized in the resurrection (compare 1 Corinthians 15:54–55). At that time, all pain, sorrow, and misery will be forever ended for the righteous (compare Revelation 21:3–4).

John has just explained the character of sin:

a. **What sin is.** It is deliberate law-breaking. Sin is choosing to obey oneself rather than obeying God.

b. **What sin does.** Sin stands in opposition to the work of Christ. To sin is to reintroduce into the world what He came to destroy.

c. **Why sin is.** It comes from a failure to abide in Christ.

d. **The origin of sin.** It comes from Satan.

e. **How sin is conquered.** It is conquered because Jesus has broken the power of evil, and through His help that same victory can be ours.

3:9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God - "Does not sin" means he does not continue to live in sin. "His seed" refers to God's seed, which is God's word (Luke 8:11). In the original Greek, the phrase "he cannot sin" is in the present tense. This means that he cannot continue to live a life of sin as he did before.

God, through John, is demanding a life that is always on guard against sin—a life in which sin is not the normal, accepted pattern, but rather an abnormal and temporary failure.

The seedless navel orange might help our understanding of this new birth and new character. When the first naval (navel) orange trees were brought to California from Brazil, they were grafted onto older, seedy orange trees and proved to be a success. From the graft down, they remained of the old variety, but from the graft upward, they produced the new variety. However, growers still had to watch for new shoots from the old stock below the graft, and when they appeared, they were removed. So, it is with a Christian: once born again, he has a new life, but he must continually remove the "buds" of the old life when they appear.

3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest - "Manifest" means, "made clear, evident, or conspicuous."

Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother - John now adds love for one's brother to the practice of righteousness as a mark of the child of God.

The absence of such love is a disqualification for true righteousness. Righteousness by itself might appear cold and judicial, but the addition of love gives warmth to righteousness.

Since righteousness and love are inseparable in the character of God, and as revealed in Christ, they must also be inseparable in the lives of God's children.

He who does not love his brother actually has no brother to love. In refusing to love one of God's family, he has effectively excluded himself from the family itself.

3:11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another - The Greek word for “love” in this verse (AGAPAŌMEV) is present, subjunctive, active. This shows that there is to be an ongoing attitude of love (see also John 13:34 and 1 John 2:7).

3:12 not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous - The phrase stating that Cain was “of the wicked one” tells us that Cain’s spiritual father was actually the devil. He was following the devil’s will instead of God’s will.

> Genesis 4:5-7, “But He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So, the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.’“
>
> Proverbs 15:8, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.”

Many conflicts between Christians involve a breakdown of love—things like pride, impatience, hurt feelings, lack of forgiveness, or a failure to understand one another. These problems, and many others, result from an “absence of brotherly love.”

C. LOVE AND HATRED CONTRASTED.....3:13-24

3:13 Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you - The Greek word for “marvel” (THAUMAZŌ) means “to be amazed” or “to wonder.” The phrase “if the world hates you” is a first-class conditional statement that should be understood as “since” (compare John 15:18–20; Luke 10:16; and John 17:14).

> On this earth, Christ suffered, so why do some Christians think their lives will be free from suffering?
>
> Someone once said, “Even though we live on the same planet as wicked unbelievers, we are not to live on the same level.”

3:14 We know that we have passed - The phrase “have passed” means, “to pass over from one place to another, to transfer, to migrate.”

From death to life - We should note that the prepositions used here, “from” and “to” emphasize the passing over, or transferring, from one place to another. A dramatic change has taken place.

Because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death - Love of the brethren is not optional for the faithful Christian. Notice the phrase "abides in death." As the presence of love signifies life, so its absence signifies death. The reference to "death" here points not only to present spiritual death but also to its final outcome in the next life.

3:15 Whoever hates his brother - Jesus often warned about the dangers of anger and hate. Notice His words in the following passage:

> Matthew 5:21-22, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."
>
> > "Raca" is from a Hebrew word meaning, "to be empty." It describes someone who is worthless, and lacking in intelligence. It was a term of great contempt.

Is a murderer - This Greek word for "murderer" is also found in John 8:44.

> John 8:44, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him - John is showing that love and hatred, life and death, and light and darkness cannot go together. They are completely opposite.

> When he says, "no murderer has eternal life abiding in him," he is not only talking about physical murder, but also the attitude behind it—hatred toward others. John is clearly teaching by inspiration that hatred is like the beginning of murder. Because of this, a life marked by hatred does not match the life God gives.
>
> > Since God is love, His children are meant to reflect His character by loving one another. It would not make sense for someone who belongs to God to continue living in hatred.

3:16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us - This indicates the purpose of the death of Christ. He died "for" us! The use of this powerful preposition ("for") paints a vivid picture of someone who has fallen (wounded or in

grave danger, on the brink of perishing) when another person rushes in to lift them up, tend to their wounds, rescue them, and ultimately save them.

And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren - This phrase is in the present tense, indicating that the action is ongoing and should be maintained.

> If we are to avoid the hate which motivated Cain, we must adopt the love which motivated Christ.
>
> This verse shows how the Christian should imitate the example of love found in John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."
>
> > Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."
> >
> > 1 Peter 2:21, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps."

3:17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need - The phrase, "this world's goods" refers to those things pertaining to life, such as wealth or possessions (compare Luke 15:12).

And shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? - The Greek word translated as "shuts up" suggests a barrier has been raised against the human feelings which these situations would naturally call for.

> We are not often called upon to give our lives for our brethren, but this is the same principle in action, even though it is at a lower level of intensity.
>
> It is the willingness to sacrifice that which has value in our own lives to enrich the lives of others.
>
> If love calls us to act and we do nothing, we are deceiving ourselves when we claim to follow Christ.

3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth - In everyday life, it's easy to talk about love: to say kind things, make promises, or express good intentions. But this phrase is pushing beyond that. It's saying that real love shows up in actions—helping someone when it's inconvenient, being patient when it's hard, telling the truth even when it costs you, and following through on what you say.

> James 2:15-18, “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

3:19 And by this we know that we are of the truth - The phrase “by this” refers to loving not only in words, but in deeds and truth.

And shall assure our hearts before Him - The phrase “assure our hearts” literally means, to “persuade” our hearts. It describes having full assurance of faith, hope, and understanding, that we are of the truth, belonging to God, being loved by Him with an everlasting love unto salvation.

3:20 For if our heart condemns us - The Greek word for “condemn” (KATAGINŌSKŌ) is present, subjunctive, active meaning, “to know something against, to condemn, to make a final judgment.”

God is greater than our heart, and knows all things - Rienecker and Rogers give us the following:

> “Our conscience is by no means infallible; its condemnation may often be unjust. We can, therefore, appeal from our conscience to God who is greater and more knowledgeable. Indeed, he knows all things, including our secret motives and deepest resolves, and it is implied, will be more merciful toward us than our own heart” - *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*.

God not only knows our sins, He knows our love, longings and repentant character. God’s knowledge gives Him perfect understanding, judgment and sympathy.

However, the accusations of our conscience must always be treated seriously. We must never go against our conscience (Acts 24:16; Romans 13:5; 14:21-23; 1 Timothy 4:2).

3:21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God - The cleansing from every sin (John 1:9) by the blood of Jesus, when we obey God’s plan of salvation, cleanses the conscience (Hebrews 9:9, 14; 10:2, 22).

When we obey the gospel by being baptized for the forgiveness of our sins, the blood of Jesus cleanses us completely. His blood also cleanses our conscience, and we are then able to have boldness toward God.

> Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
>
> > The boldness here is not confidence in ourselves, for we are seeking mercy. Rather, it is confidence in God and His promises. See the comments on 1 John 2:28 for a fuller explanation.

3:22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight - The phrase “we keep” means that we obey His commands. We receive because we keep His commandments. This is the basis on which Christians receive their requests from God. However, there is another aspect to this that John mentions later in the text that must not be missed:

> 1 John 5:14-15, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything **according to His will**, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”

3:23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment - Believing in the “name” of Jesus Christ means trusting in who he truly is—his nature, character and authority.

> It means believing that He is the Son of God, with a unique relationship to God the Father that no one else has or ever will have. It also means believing that He perfectly reveals God to humanity and that He is the Savior of our souls.

3:24 Now 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 us - The Holy Spirit is the “guarantee” (“earnest” - KJV) of our inheritance (compare Ephesians 1:13-14).

> 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Since Christians have Deity dwelling in them they should keep the premises clean – free from sin!

D. SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND SPIRIT OF ERROR CONTRASTED 4:1-6

4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits - The "spirits" here are teachers or prophets (verse 2). This they were able to do by:

a. Exercising the miraculous power of "discerning *(judging)* of spirits" - 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 or

b. Comparing the claims of these men with the known teaching inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Notice - it is John's readers who were to make the test and not some church head or official.

This proves that religious leaders or institutions that claim exclusive authority and infallibility in determining truth are mistaken. All Christians have the responsibility to test what is being taught according to the standard of Scripture.

Whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world - The Greek word translated by the phrase "gone out" (EXERCHOMAI) is in the perfect active indicative tense. This means "have gone out from." The perfect tense expresses the continuing state of their remaining in the world, as distinguished from the single act of their departure.

4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God - Notice that here now John is giving them the first test to determine if a prophet is from God. The second test is found in verse six.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God - "Every spirit" here refers to every individual (teacher, prophet) who is making these statements. They were motivated either by the Holy Spirit or an evil spirit.

"Confesses" - In the Greek this literally means, "**continues** to confess." What is the significance of this confession that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh?

a. "Jesus" - His humanity.

b. "Christ" - He is the anointed Son of God, Deity.

c. "Has come in the flesh" - Deity taking on human flesh.

John is saying by inspiration that believing the fact that Jesus truly came in the flesh is a key test of whether someone is a genuine Christian. By emphasizing this, he is directly opposing Gnostic teachings, which denied that Jesus had a real physical body.

4:3 And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God - What are the implications of denying that Jesus came in the flesh? To deny that Jesus came in the flesh:

a. Is to deny that Jesus can be our example. If He was not a real human being, living under human conditions, He could not show mankind how to live.

b. Is to deny that Jesus can be our High Priest, opening the way to God. The true High Priest must be like us in all things, knowing our infirmities and temptations (Hebrews 4:14-15).

c. Is to deny that Jesus can be our Savior. The only true mediator must be both human and divine.

d. Is to deny the resurrection of the body.

e. Is to deny that there can ever be any union between God and man. If spirit is wholly good and the body is wholly evil, then God and man could never meet.

And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world - See the notes on 1 John 2:18 for a detailed discussion of the Antichrist.

These false teachers showed the spirit of an antichrist by opposing Christ and His teachings. In this sense, all false teachers—even today—share that same spirit. They are “of the antichrist” because they stand against Christ’s message, His church, and His people.

Even if they claim to follow Him, their actions place them in opposition to Him. Teaching some truths does not prove they belong to the Lord; the errors they spread and their resistance to Christ reveal their true spirit—the spirit of the antichrist.

4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them - The Greek word (NIKAŌ) translated by the phrase, “have overcome” is perfect, indicative, active. It

means, “have conquered, have been victorious.” The perfect tense coveys the idea that they, “have conquered and *are* **still** victorious.”

These Christians were not more educated or more skilled in philosophical debate than the false teachers, but by refusing to be persuaded by them and opposing their false doctrine they had overcome them.

Because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world - This refers to God being in them. God is greater than these so-called “wise men” who were trying to mislead them.

4:5 They are of the world. Therefore, they speak as of the world, and the world hears them - The world recognizes its own people and listens to a message which originates in its own circle. This helps explain their popularity. They try to reshape the gospel to fit whatever secular ideas are popular at the time.

But this kind of “worldliness” is especially harmful to Christianity.

It may be accepted because it matches current trends—but those trends change. When they do, the message loses its appeal. The true gospel doesn’t depend on fashion, so it never goes out of date.

4:6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error - This is the second test given to them to determine if a prophet is from God.

The “we...us...us...we” in this verse refers to John and the other apostles.

To know God means having a close relationship with Him, formed by obeying His word as revealed by the Spirit.

People who truly know God will naturally be willing to listen to the teaching of the apostles.

The main issue is still the same: the conflict between truth and error. In the end, it all depends on whether someone belongs to God or follows the ways of the world.

E. BROTHERLY LOVE COMMANDED 4:7-21

4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God - The return to the topic of brotherly love connects to what was just said: The Spirit of truth leads people to love, while the spirit of error works against it.

The kind of “love” the New Testament commands is a deep concern for the well-being of others—especially fellow Christians.

4:8 He who does not love does not know God - The phrase “does not know God” in the Greek is in the aorist active indicative tense, meaning “has not known” (from the beginning).

For God is love - This is, in essence, a compressed statement of the gospel. It was the act of God in giving His only begotten Son (John 3:16) that gave meaning to His love. Likewise, it is our acts of obedience that give meaning to our love.

“God is Love” is the explanation for:

a. Creation - His desire to share Himself with others.

b. Free will - unless love is a free response it is not love.

c. Providence - His creating act is followed by His constant care.

d. The life beyond - the ultimate reward of love, eternal life.

To view God solely as a God of love is to misunderstand His full character. Those who rely on God’s love while rejecting obedience to His will should also consider what the Bible teaches about His wrath toward those who resist His love and refuse to obey (Romans 1:18; Ephesians 5:6). God’s love should never be understood as overriding His other attributes, such as His justice, immutability, faithfulness, and sovereignty.

4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us - Not only for people in John’s day, but also for us today, we are blessed to live in a time in which God’s love continues to be shown and experienced.

that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him - From this we learn four things: (1) God truly loves people; (2) His love has been shown and made known; (3) it was shown through the gift of His Son; and (4) the purpose of this gift is that we might have life through Him.

A key phrase found here (also in John 3:16) is “His only begotten Son” (Greek: TON HUION AUTOU TON MONOGENE), which literally means “His Son, the only one of its kind.” The word Greek word (MONOGENE) translated as, “only begotten,” means unique or one of a kind.

It shows that Jesus is different from all other "sons of God." While Christians are called sons of God, Jesus is the Son in a unique sense that belongs to no one else. To give Him a lesser status, as some modern doctrines do, is an attack on His Deity.

4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins - God's love is demonstrated in Jesus. When we look at Jesus we see two things about the love of God:

a. It is a love which holds nothing back and

b. It is a totally undeserved love.

> Some teach that Jesus had no choice in His coming and sacrifice, but Jesus said, "Therefore, My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father" (John 10:17-18).

The Greek word translated as "propitiation" (HILASMOS) appears only here and in 1 John 2:2 in the Greek New Testament, though it is used more often in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), where it refers to a sacrifice for atonement (Leviticus 6:6-7; Numbers 5:8-9; Ezekiel 44:27). When John speaks of Christ's death as a propitiation, he is referring to the sacrifice for sin made when Jesus willingly died on the cross for us (1 Peter 2:24; Matthew 26:28).

4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another - "If God so loved us," is a first-class conditional sentence. It means, "**since** God so loved us." The phrase, "we also ought" is present, indicative, active. This means, "to be morally obligated, to owe a debt which must be paid." In other words, "We **must**!"

The responsibility is on us—you and me—to love someone else first.

4:12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us - The point is that the unseen God, who was once revealed in His Son is now revealed in Christians, if and when they love one another (compare Exodus 33:20; John 1:18; Colossians 1:15; John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; 6:16).

This does not mean that when we begin to love, God comes to dwell in us, but that our love for one another is evidence of God's indwelling presence (1 John 3:17).

4:13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit - Dwelling is something shared between the Lord and His people. Since this is a spiritual idea, it means they can be together in the same way at the same time—living in fellowship with one another.

> But how does having the Spirit "in us" show that God is present with us? The first result of the Spirit's work is love: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22–23). These qualities reflect God's own character, showing that His presence is at work in us when these traits are shown in our lives.

4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world - "We" refers to John and the other apostles. The phrase "of the world" shows that the Savior is not only for the Jews or for any special group, such as the Gnostics, but for all people.

> The reach of His mission stretched as far as all humanity, and only human stubbornness and unbelief placed limits on its effect.

4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God - This confession implies a complete surrender of one's will to the Lord, which expresses itself in willing obedience to His commands.

These verses (1 John 4:9-15) tell us Jesus is:

a. The bringer of life (9),

b. The restorer of the lost relationship with God (10),

c. The Savior of the world (14) and

d. The Son of God (15).

4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him - The Greek for "we have known" literally means, "we have come to know and still know."

"Known" and "believed" are not in conflict, even though they are technically different. What was "known" refers to the evidence they had seen, and what they "believed" was based on that evidence—namely, that God has great love for humanity.

4:17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment - Christian confidence and Christian love belong together. In contrast, shame and fear have no place alongside a Christian's confidence.

Because as He is, so are we in this world - The idea is, "because as He is (love), so are we in this world (loving)" (compare 1 John 2:28; James 2:13).

4:18 There is no fear in love - This "fear" mentioned here is not "awe" or "respect" we should have for God. This fear (PHOBOS) is terror or dread. This is the characteristic of a slave in the presence of a cruel and heartless master.

But perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment - "Perfect" means mature, complete, or fully grown. The phrase "casts out fear" means to drive out or remove, like turning something out of a house. In the Greek, the verb is in the present tense and is emphasized, meaning it "keeps on casting out." This paints a strong picture of fear being actively and continually pushed out.

But he who fears has not been made perfect in love - The thought of future punishment can cause present suffering, because the expectation of judgment brings fear even before anything actually happens.

> It is like a child who knows he has done wrong and expects to be punished—he feels distress even before the punishment is given.
>
> In the same way, a believer who is anxious or fearful about the Day of Judgment shows that God's love has not yet fully matured in him. He has not yet reached full spiritual maturity.
>
> > As Plato observed, "Fear is a sign that a person considers himself worthy of punishment, because it is the thought of punishment that produces fear."
>
> So, if someone is afraid of judgment, it is worth asking why. Such fear may indicate either a limited understanding of God's love or a tendency to tolerate sin too easily.

When love becomes mature, fear is replaced by confidence and mercy. Christians begin to reflect God's own mercy (see James 2:13; 1 Peter 1:8; Matthew 5:48; Luke 6:36).

4:19 We love Him because He first loved us - Love exists in the heart of the one who has been made new in Christ. This love is directed both toward God and toward other people. But why do we love? Is it to cause God to love us? No, God loved

us first, even before we ever loved Him. Our love for Him is awakened by His prior love for us.

> Christians show love, but in doing so they do not place God under any obligation. He loved us first, before we ever loved Him, and proved that love by giving His Son to die for us. Only someone who is ungrateful would fail to respond to Him with love.

4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? - Ordinarily it is easier to love that which is seen and near. Therefore, if one fails in the easier task of loving that which is seen (his brother) he will obviously fail in the more difficult task of loving that which he cannot see (God).

4:21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also - Based on the reasoning in the previous verse, John instructs Christians not to claim that they love God if they are unwilling to love their fellow Christians as well, because such a claim of love will not be accepted.

F. TESTS OF FAITH AND LOVE.....5:1-12

5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God - "Whoever believes," is, literally, "Whoever continues to believe." It is an ongoing faith with obedience.

> John is emphasizing this truth to expose the false teachings of the Gnostics. Some claimed that Jesus was not the Christ, rejecting his divine nature. Others said that Christ and Jesus were separate, denying his humanity. Still others argued that his physical body was only an illusion, denying that he was truly real.
>
> To confess that Jesus is the Christ is to affirm all three: his divinity, his humanity, and his real, physical existence.

> Some use this verse as a proof text that faith is the only thing required to gain salvation. However, this does not harmonize with the Bible's teaching. The New Testament teaches we are saved by many things. We are saved by:
>
> - Grace (Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8)
> - Mercy (Titus 3:5)
> - Jesus' Blood (1 John 1:7; Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7)
> - Works (James 2:24; Acts 10:34-35; Philippians 2:12)

- Obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9)
- Endurance (Matthew 10:22)
- Patience (Hebrews 6:12; Revelation 14:12-13)
- The Love of the Truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10)
- Fear (Jude 23; Philippians 2:12)
- Faith/Belief (Hebrews 11:6; Acts 16:30-31)
- Repentance (Luke 13:3; 2 Corinthians 7:10)
- Confession (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10)
- Baptism (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21)

There is no doubt we are saved by faith, but we are not saved by faith only. Looking at the list above we can clearly see we are not saved by faith only. The phrase "faith only" is only found once in the scriptures, and it teaches we are not saved by faith only.

> James 2:24, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by **faith only**."

Faith alone has never been enough for righteousness. The demons have faith but they are not righteous.

> James 2:19, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!"

Righteousness requires faith and obedience working together. There is really no reason for the confusion in the religious world today concerning the issue of faith and works. One extreme says faith only and the other extreme says works only. The Bible is clear that neither extreme is correct. God's word teaches that we are counted as righteous when faith and works of obedience combine (Galatians 5:6; James 2:18, 22).

<u>And everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him</u> - Begetting means bringing forth or producing a child. In biblical language, it especially refers to a father causing offspring to come into existence. So, when someone is "begotten," it means they have been brought forth by a father.

> The seed of reproduction is the word of God, and it tells us that Jesus is the Christ. Whenever a man believes and obeys, he is begotten of the Father. Therefore, it says that everyone who loves Him who begot (that is, the Father) also loves him who is begotten (that is, His children). All this is logical:

1) To believe that Jesus is the Christ is evidence that one has been begotten of God.

2) To be begotten of God requires loving God.

3) To love God requires one to love God's children.

4) Those who love God's children have been begotten of God.

5) Therefore, to believe that Jesus is the Christ requires one to love God's children and demonstrates the fact that one has been begotten of God.

But how are we to know whether we truly love God's children? This question is answered in the very next verse.

5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments - In verse 1 "faith" was declared to be the test of sonship. In this verse the "love of God" and "obedience" are the tests of sonship. Is this a contradiction? No, "love" and "obedience" are embraced by "faith." The conclusion is that love and obedience are included in true biblical faith.

Those who say they believe Jesus is the Christ, but refuse to obey Him are liars. Our goal should be to help them to grow in their love for Him, and then their obedience should follow naturally.

5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments - Our love for God is shown by obeying Him. True love is more than words or feelings; it is seen in a willing desire to do what God says. Just as a loving child wants to please his father, the child of God seeks to obey God's commandments. Love is the natural response of one who has been begotten of God. Therefore, keeping God's commandments is evidence of love for Him.

And His commandments are not burdensome - God's commandments are not the demands of a harsh ruler trying to make life difficult. They are the instructions of a loving Father who wants what is best for His children. Therefore, the person who truly loves God does not resent His commandments, but desires to obey them willingly and sincerely.

Love for God and obedience to God cannot be separated. When we truly love God, we will want to obey Him; and when we obey Him, we show that our love is genuine.

5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world - Their faith enabled them to overcome everything that is opposed to God.

> John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

The Greek word translated “overcomes” is in the present active indicative tense, pointing to an ongoing struggle in which victory comes through continual perseverance.

And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith - Those who place their faith in Jesus as the Son of God are united with Him, so that His victory becomes their victory. Any victory they experience comes not through their own strength, but through His power.

5:5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? - Confessing Jesus to be the Son of God is the same as confessing Him to be the Christ. Both confessions are brought together by John in John 20:31 (compare 1 Corinthians 15:57; Romans 8:37; Revelation 12:11; 17:14).

> John 20:30-31, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is **the Christ**, **the Son of God**, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

5:6 This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood - The word “He” refer to Jesus as the Son of God. This verse points to three things that testify to that truth.

> “He came” refers to His coming into the world, especially the beginning of His public ministry. The “water” refers to His baptism, when John the immerser recognized that Jesus was the one he had been preparing the way for. The Spirit is mentioned because He appeared (descending like a dove), along with God’s voice declaring Jesus as His Son.
>
> The “blood” refers to Jesus’ death on the cross, where He shed His blood (John 19:34), bringing to completion the long history of sacrifice that began with the sacrifices of the Old Testament and continued through the ages (see Luke 3).
>
> > Some Gnostics were saying Jesus came by water, but not by blood. In other words, they were saying His baptism was an essential part of His Messiahship, but His cross was not.

One Gnostic (Cerinthus) taught that “the Christ” (a spiritual being) came down on the man Jesus when He was baptized, but left Him before He died.

In other words, some were claiming that Christ came through “water” (baptism) but not through “blood” (His death). John corrects this false teaching by saying that Jesus came through both. The same Jesus who was baptized in the Jordan is the very one who died on the cross—He is fully and truly the Christ in both.

And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth - John and the apostles testified to what they personally saw and heard (1 John 1:2; 4:14). However, their testimony was supported and confirmed by the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:24; 4:13). This agrees with Jesus’ promise that the Holy Spirit would also bear witness concerning Him (John 15:26-33).

5:7 For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one - Some translations omit this phrase because it is not found in some of the oldest Greek manuscripts. However, it should be understood that this wording does not add any new meaning beyond what other passages already teach on the same subject, and nothing essential is lost if it is omitted.

The Greek text used for many modern Bible translations is based on ancient manuscripts, early translations, and writings of the early Church Fathers, some of which date back close to the time of the apostles.

For most of the New Testament—over 99 percent—there is no serious doubt about the original wording. We can therefore have confidence that we have the inspired word of God.

Only a very small part—less than 1 percent—has differences in wording that could affect how a verse is understood. However, none of these differences change any of the foundational beliefs of Christianity.

5:8 And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one - This is the threefold testimony for the divinity of Christ. The testimony of the “Spirit” is found in words of the New Testament, written by inspired men (1 John 5:6). The “water” (and the Spirit) bore witness at the baptism of Jesus.

Matthew 3:16-17, “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him,

and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The “blood” is the sacrifice of Jesus that testified at His death on the cross.

Romans 3:23-25, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,”

John 19:32-34, “Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.”

This sacrifice is remembered by Christians on every first day of the week when the Lord’s Supper is observed, which includes the unleavened bread (representing His body) and the fruit of the vine (representing His shed blood). As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:26, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

5:9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son - This kind of argument means reasoning from something smaller to something greater. Since we accept the testimony of inspired men as true, then we should be even more willing to accept what God says, since He is greater.

5:10 He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself - Earlier we saw that the Holy Spirit is one of the witnesses to the truth of the Christian faith. The Spirit lives in all Christians (Acts 5:32; Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6). The Word (as the instrument or tool of the Spirit) is the very foundation of faith. Biblical faith gives us confidence that the witness is true. This confidence continues in the child of God. Therefore, the Christian has continual assurance that what he has believed and entrusted himself to is real.

he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son - To deny the deity of Jesus is not only unbelief; it also calls God’s truthfulness into question.

5:11 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son - John means that in giving us the evidence of Christ's Sonship, we are also given assurance that we may have eternal life through Him.

> John 11:25, "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.'"

5:12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life - Since having the Son is conditional on faithfulness and obedience to Him, it follows that the life contemplated here (eternal life) is also conditional.

> John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."
>
> Hebrews 5:9, "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."
>
> Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

IV. CONCLUSION.....5:13-21

A. ADDITIONAL OBJECT IN WRITING 5:13-15

5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God - John is still opposing the Gnostics and their claim to have special, superior knowledge. In contrast, true knowledge belongs to the Christian and is found in the message John proclaims in this letter.

> "You may know that you have eternal life." Do you know whether you would go to heaven if you died right now? John says this is something you can know, and the answer can be "yes." Some people think that saying "yes" is evidence of pride or overconfidence. However, John's main point is that assurance of eternal life is possible.

[For additional information please see the appendices - DIFFICULT PASSAGES 1ST JOHN 5:13-17 by Leonard M. Gray, and ETERNAL LIFE IN PROSPECT by Jerry Moffitt.]

5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us - John's subject here is prayer. Notice the verse says, "according to His will." Jesus understood this condition.

Matthew 26:39, “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’”

The will of God is revealed to us today in the New Testament. This means we are to ask in harmony with what has been taught in the Scriptures.

John tells these Christians that the Father “hears us” (He actively listens to and regards the prayers of believers) if they:

a. Are obedient — 1 John 3:22

b. Remain in Christ — John 15:7

c. Pray in His name (by His authority) — John 14:14

5:15 And if - This is first class conditional meaning, “since.”

We know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him - Sometimes we may not be able to see the way God has answered our prayer.

The Father sometimes answers “yes” to a prayer by saying “no.” In other words, He may refuse a request, not out of rejection, but in order to provide what is truly needed for our good in His wisdom (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

B. THE SIN UNTO DEATH 5:16-17

5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death - After praying for this brother, the Christian’s responsibility is not finished. It is also necessary to speak to him directly. Prayer to God for him should be joined with honest conversation with him about his situation. In some cases, God’s help may come through the Christian being His instrument—offering support, guidance, and encouragement that leads the brother to repentance.

There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that - What is this sin?

Major Premise: The Lord will forgive any sin, of whatever nature, that a brother is willing to repent and confess (1 John 1:8).

Minor Premise: There is, however, a sin which the Lord will not forgive (1 John 5:16).

Therefore: The sin which the Lord will not forgive is simply a sin, any sin, all sin that a brother will not repent and confess.

The "sin leading to death" ("sin unto death" KJV) refers to a settled condition of the heart—a stubborn and willful refusal to admit sin or turn away from it.

This kind of attitude effectively shuts the door to repentance.

The only way to recognize when a brother or sister has hardened the heart beyond repentance is through personal, loving confrontation. If, after every effort has been made to help, there is still a refusal to repent, then our prayers for that person will do no good.

5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death - John says this to point out that not every sin is fatal. There is a sin that does not lead to death if a Christian repents and prays for forgiveness (compare notes in 1 John 2:16; 3:4).

C. DIVINE ASSURANCES 5:18-21

5:18 We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself - This verse, in conjunction with verses 19 and 20, begins with the phrase "we know." This phrase shows full persuasion and complete confidence.

By using the phrase "does not sin," John is not saying that a Christian never commits sin. The point is that faithful Christians do not continue living a life of sin.

The idea is one of direction and habit. A true believer may still stumble, but sin is no longer the controlling pattern of life. Instead of being marked by ongoing rebellion, the Christian is marked by repentance, growth, and a desire to walk in obedience to God.

And the wicked one does not touch him - The Greek phrase literally means "does not keep on touching him." It conveys the idea of continuing to hold on to or grip someone in order to keep harming them.

5:19 We know that we are of God - The Greek phrase "of God" literally means "out of God." This connects to the earlier idea of being begotten by Him as His offspring (1 John 3:10; 4:6).

And the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one - Most certainly this refers to the devil. In various passages he is referred to as “the prince of the devils” (Matthew 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22) and “the prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). This describes him as the ruler of the ungodly citizens of this world who follow his rule (compare: Ephesians 2:2; 6:11; Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 5:8).

5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true - The word “know” is often used by inspired writers to express strong assurance. It is not meant to replace faith, but to describe confidence based on faith.

> The apostle John could also use the word “know” in a literal sense regarding Christ because he had personally been with Him throughout His earthly ministry. In addition, John knew that Christ had given him inspired understanding. Before leaving the world, Jesus promised His apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth (John 16:13).
>
> John also contrasts the true God with the false gods worshiped by many people. The true God is the source of eternal life, having sent His only begotten Son into the world for that very purpose.

and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life - Now His people are in Him, placed under His care, preserved in Him, and represented by Him.

> This union takes place at conversion. Through obedience to the plan of salvation, including being washed in His blood through baptism, we are made new in Him and begin to live in Him, while He also lives in us. We are joined to Him like branches connected to a vine and enjoy ongoing fellowship with Him (John 15:1-6).

5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols - In the Greek “keep” describes ongoing action. It means, “keep on guarding, keep on keeping yourselves from idols.” This emphasizes the responsibility of personal effort.

> John is not only warning against physical idols, but also against false teachings about God. Any understanding of God that does not match how He has revealed Himself is, in a sense, an idol. John is saying that once someone has received the truth, they should not turn to false or substitute “gods,” including distorted or partial versions of the truth. All substitutes must be rejected!

Amen - The word “Amen” began as a Hebrew word (Numbers 5:22) and was later carried into Greek and then English. It comes from a Hebrew root meaning to be firm, faithful, reliable, or true—ideas connected with trust and certainty.

In Scripture, “Amen” can be used at the beginning of a statement to mean “truly” or “certainly” (see Matthew 5:18; Mark 3:28; John 3:3). At the end of a statement or prayer, it means “so be it” or “may it be fulfilled.” When used as an adjective, it carries the sense of “firm” or “true.”

Some dictionaries suggest that “Amen” at the end of a prayer simply expresses approval. However, our approval does not make it true. It is more correct to think of it as “this is true,” or “may it come to pass,” or “may it be fulfilled.”

END

APPENDICES

Limited Atonement.....
Difficult Passages 1 John 5:13-17 .....
Eternal Life in Prospect .....
Gnosticism.....

Limited Atonement

A basic tenet of Calvinism is that Christ died only for the ones God had unconditionally chosen to save.

The doctrine of Limited Atonement is a natural outgrowth of the doctrine of Unconditional Election coupled with the idea that everything God does has purpose. (See Isaiah 55:11) Calvinists rationalize that God would not waste the sacrifice of Christ on those whom He had determined not to save. They believe that since God chose only **some** to be saved, it would be foolish to think that He sent His Son to shed His atoning blood for the sins of all people. Their conclusion: Christ only died for the elect.

In this article we will look at this doctrine by examining the misused texts used to support it, and citing Scriptural objections to it.

Misused Texts Used to Support Limited Atonement

John 10:15. The argument made on this passage is that Jesus died only for His sheep which Calvinists take to mean the elect. The answer to that argument is that in verse 16 Jesus taught that there are "other sheep I have which are not of this fold" who would come into the fold. Calvinists deny that one can change from "sheep…not of this fold" into "sheep" of the fold or from "goats" to "sheep." (See Matthew 25:31-46) But there are many examples of those who had changed from "goats" to "sheep." They include the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) and the apostle Paul (1 Timothy 1:13-14).

Acts 20:28 and **Ephesians 5:25**. The argument based on these texts is that Christ died only for those who are saved, the elect. The answer here is that there is no doubt that the church is composed of the saved and that Jesus died to purchase the church. The Scriptural truth that Calvinists overlook, though, is that any person can become a part of that church. (Revelation 22:17) The church consists of:

- All who obey Jesus (Hebrews 5:8-9). It is not limited to just those who Calvinists say are elected to salvation.
- Those who do the will of the Father. (Matthew 7:21)
- All who are saved (Acts 2:47). Though not all will be saved, those who "gladly receive" the word, are added by the Lord to His church. (Acts 2:41, 47)

Romans 9:13. The argument Calvinists use in relation to this passage is that the love of God in giving Jesus as a sacrifice was not a general kindness to all creation. John Gill in *Five Points of Calvinism*, says, "But it is a special and discriminating love, the favor which he bears to His own people, as distinct from others." To answer this argument, we say that "special and discriminating love"

sounds quite different than the Biblical teaching that “there is no partiality with God.” (Romans 2:11) Romans 9:13 simply shows the righteousness of God -- that God was not unrighteous in His selection of Jacob to be an ancestor of the Messiah. Admittedly, this passage shows that God preferred Jacob over Esau even before their birth -- not in reference to their salvation but in regards to the election of the descendants of Jacob as the people through whom the physical Messiah would come. In commenting on this passage, Robertson L. Whiteside in *A New Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Saints at Rome*, said,

> “...Jacob and Esau were full brothers; and though they were twins, Esau the first-born was the natural heir of the promise. Yet of the two, God selected Jacob, even before they were born, and therefore before they had done anything good or bad, ‘that the purpose of God according to election might stand.’ The purpose inhered in the promise. God was selecting his own instruments to work out his own plans.
>
> “In choosing Jacob, God chose his descendants; and every Jew gloried in that choice. But the selection of Jacob and the rejection of Esau had nothing to do with their salvation. If it had pertained to their salvation, there would have been no point in mentioning the fact that the younger was selected instead of the older; for even the most dogmatic predestinarian would not say that the oldest son is the natural heir of salvation and all the other sons, reprobates. The fact is that the selection of Jacob was the selection of a people rather than an individual. Had it been the election to salvation, then the nations descending from Jacob were all elected to salvation, and Esau’s descendants were all lost.” (p. 199)

Scriptural Objections to Limited Atonement

The gospel is for all. (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16) While Calvinists rationalize that God would not waste Christ’s sacrifice on those whom He had determined not to save, they do not seem to realize the waste that occurs by Calvinist preachers who preach the gospel to all people including those so totally depraved that they cannot understand it. Consider also the waste of preaching the gospel to those God will save whether they hear it or not.

Jesus died for all people.

- **Luke 19:10.** “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
- **John 12:32.** “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

- **Romans 5:18.** “Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”
- **2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.** “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”
- **1 Timothy 2:5, 6.** “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all…”
- **1 Timothy 4:10. “**For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.”
- **Hebrews 2:9.** “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

The blood of Christ can wash away anyone’s sins. (1 John 2:1-2) “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” Propitiation is “...akin to HILEOS (‘merciful, propitious’), signifies ‘an expiation, a means whereby sin is covered and remitted.’ It is used in the New Testament of Christ Himself as ‘the propitiation,’ in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, signifying that He Himself, through the expiatory sacrifice of His death, is the personal means by whom God shows mercy to the sinner who believes on Christ as the One thus provided. In the former passage He is described as ‘the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.’ The italicized addition in the KJV, ‘the sins of,’ gives a wrong interpretation. **What is indicated is that provision is made for the whole world**, so that no one is, by divine predetermination, excluded from the scope of God’s mercy; the efficacy of the ‘propitiation,’ however, is made actual for those who believe. In 4:10, the fact that God ‘sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins,’ is shown to be the great expression of God’s love toward man, and the reason why Christians should love one another. In the Septuagint., Leviticus 25:9; Numbers 5:8; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Psalm 130:4; Ezekiel 44:27; Amos 8:14.” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words,* Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985)

Conclusion

It would be extremely difficult for us to devise a doctrine which would be more out of harmony with plain Biblical teaching than the doctrine of Limited Atonement. The doctrine of Limited Atonement stands in direct opposition to the death of Jesus for all (John 12:32) and the Father’s desire for all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

DIFFICULT PASSAGES - 1 John 5:13-17

By: Leonard M. Gray

Introductory Observations

"There is a sin unto death (v. 16) and "there is a sin not unto death" (v. 17). These are unusual statements. At first reading, they are extremely confusing and difficult. When one consults a dozen or so of the many commentaries available the difficulties seem to multiply! These difficulties, however, are mostly caused by the basic "theology" of the commentator.

Let it be recognized, at the very beginning, that these expressions, and the whole discussion they raise, are not the main thrust of the writer. In this context, the Holy Spirit is moving John to write words of assurance.

1 John 5:13-17

> *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*
>
> *And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us:*
>
> *And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.*
>
> *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*
>
> *All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.*
>
> In 5:13 He assures us that we have eternal life in Christ.
>
> In 5:14-15 He assures us that our prayers are answered, if according to His will.

It is in respect to the assurance of answered prayers that he says, "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death."

Let it be observed that "a sin unto death" is not exact. There is no article in the Greek text here: This indicates that the noun "Sin" is qualitative and not "identifying," and is more accurately translated, "there is sin (not a sin) unto death"- -and, "there is sin not

unto death." So, there is sin, of which a Christian may be guilty, which is not mortal, fatal or "unto death." The individual under consideration was not so far gone that the sin was unto death.

Alien sinners cannot be under consideration - here in either case.

Throughout the letter, it is stated that these are God's "children" in "fellowship" with God and with his apostles (1:1 ff.). These are blessed with Jesus as their advocate (2:1ff). In the immediate context, these are they that have eternal life in the Son (5:13). It is not God's will that sins of alien sinners be forgiven through prayer (as is the case here). Also, he says, "if any man sees his brother sinning..." So, the man for whom the prayer is offered is also a Christian. This is not the conclusion reached by all commentators. Some see this as an act of salvation, bringing a lost sinner out of darkness into light. Such an interpretation is contextually impossible.

Some say "sins unto death and sins not unto death" are:

1. An allusion to Jewish law making such a distinction. Such sins as adultery, etc., were punishable by death. Others were not.

2. Violation of civil laws which carried the death penalty such as murder.

3. Very grievous life style or conduct which would cause God to bring death upon the person. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1) would illustrate such a contention.

4. Sins for which "delivering unto Satan" would follow (1 Corinthians 5). All these seem completely unacceptable.

Sin Not Unto Death

The one praying and one "sinning not unto death" are brethren. They are both "walking in the light." One factor that assists in the cleansing, forgiving, life-sustaining process is prayer.

"NOT UNTO DEATH" (PROS THANATON) means not leading to death, not terminal, mortal or fatal. A similar construction is John 11:4 - "sickness not unto death."

John lets us know that God is aware of the presence of sin in Christians. He has made provision for dealing with those sins one commits while "walking in the light" (1:7). Here he assures us of the value of prayer for such instances. Sins "not unto death" are in the same category as sins while "walking in the light."

These are sins of which the individual is ashamed, remorseful and penitent. It seems that there are two basic attitudes towards one's sins.

1. I know and I care. Or, I don't know, but I would care if I knew.

2. I know and I don't care. Or, I don't know, but I wouldn't care if I did!

Sins <u>not</u> unto death are in the first category. Sins <u>unto</u> death are in the second.

Sins not unto death are those handled by our "advocate" and His "propitiatory" sacrifice. These do not move us out of the light. We maintain our sonship and continue our lives without fear of "judgment" because we continue to be "cleansed" (1:7) and given life (5:16).

<u>Sins Unto Death</u>

PROS THANATON...toward or leading to death, is very descriptive. It is terminal. These are sins regarding which he does not say we should pray. These are sins a Christian commits, looking death in the face and saying, "I know living this way will destroy my soul, but I am going to continue to live this way."

In contrast to the brother "sinning not unto death," this one is too far gone. He has chosen to walk in darkness, where there is no "cleansing" - 1 John 1:7. As with those who forsake assembling with the saints, "there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins!" (Heb 10:25-31).

That sober observation takes for granted the fact that for others there still does "remain a sacrifice for sins..." such sins would be "not unto death."

John presents the substance for a clear syllogism:

1. If we walk in the light, all sins will be cleansed ("not unto death") (1 John 1:7).

2. There are sins unto death (1 John 5:16).

3. Therefore, sins unto death are sins of those not walking in the light.

Again:

1. If we confess our sins, He will cleanse us (1 John 1:7).

2. Some sins He will not cleanse (1 John 5:16).

3. Therefore, sins unto death are sins one will not confess.

The same construction could be used with “repent” in the place of “confess.”

The Assurance of Answered Prayers

In all this, remember the thrust. The text is not a treatise on “sins unto death” or “sins not unto death.” It is an assurance of God’s readiness to answer (grant) the request of prayers according to His will.

It is not His will that we make a request for a brother sinning sins unto death.

“I Will Give Him Life For Them...”

God promises to give to him that asks, “life for them that sin not unto death.” It is obvious that the one praying is asking life for the one sinning. God says, I will give you what you asked...life for them that sin not unto death.

Some conclusions:

1. Christians are here under consideration.

2. There is sin which a Christian can commit which is not unto death.

3. There is sin which a Christian can commit which is unto death.

4. We can (should) pray for the one.

5. We cannot (should not) pray for the other.

6. Death = Spiritual.

7. Life = Spiritual.

8. Life is given for one whom death would eventually overtake when his sin <u>not</u> unto death grows to become sin <u>unto</u> death.

9. Our prayers have a very important part to play!

James 5:16 instructs brethren to pray for one another, observing that “The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” We are to “restore” our sinning brethren (Gal. 6:1) and this text provides a stunning statement of the seriousness of it all.

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

All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death (1 John 5:16-17)

ETERNAL LIFE IN PROSPECT

> *These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God* (1 John 5:13).

Calvinists, such as the Primitive Baptists and the Missionary Baptists, have abused the above passage in two ways. The Primitive Baptist says the individuals are unconditionally elect before the foundation of the world, so that they have eternal life before they believe. So, they strongly maintain that one saved presently has eternal life. The Missionary Baptist believes a Christian cannot fall from grace, so he argues that if you have eternal life now (and the Christian does, he argues), you cannot lose it, or else it would not be eternal.

Now both errors can be refuted in various ways. But when some of our old brethren (like C. R. Nichol) refuted both errors by arguing that we do not actually, literally have eternal life in our lifetime, I believe they were right. Here we have eternal life, but only in hope and in prospect. Let us notice a few observations.

The Present Tense

Some say that we have it now because the present tense is used. First, we do presently have it, but we presently have it in hope. Notice Genesis 17:5: *For the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee.* God said this to Abraham, but at that present time the nations did not exist. But notice the language ‘is that of the present. In prospect Abraham was at that time the father of many nations.

Notice Isaiah 9:1-2:

> *(1) But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time hath he made it glorious by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. (2) The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*

It is all put in the present tense. But around 700 years pass before the reality of it came in the days of Jesus. Notice Matthew 4:13-14: *(13) and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, (14) that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying...* - and the above verse of Isaiah is quoted. The people truly saw a great light, but in Isaiah’s time it was 700 years in prospect.

Notice the present tense used in Matthew 26:28:

> *For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins.*

At that time, it was a memorial of Christ's blood which was poured out, but the truth of the matter was, it was then poured out only in a sense, not literally.

A good commentary on what we have been saying is Romans 14:17.

> *As it is written, A father of many nations have I made thee) before him whom we believed, even God, who giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were.*

God can speak of things as though they are present, as though they actually were, but we are bound by time and have them only in hope. Which brings us to another consideration.

Eternal Life in Hope

Do we really have eternal life in a literal way now? Notice two passages:

> *(1) Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, (2) in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal* (Titus 1:1-2).

> *that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life* (Titus 3:7).

How do we now have eternal life? According to the apostle Paul, we have it in hope. We do not literally see eternal life In our present life; we hope to actually have it in the next world. And it was Paul who explained:

> *(24) For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? (25) But if we hope for that which ye see not, then do we with patience wait for it'* (Romans 8:24-25).

We do not understand 1 John 5:13 to mean that we literally now have eternal life. If we literally now had it, how could we hope for it?! How could we with patience wait for it?! No, we possess eternal life now, but only in hope. We possess it in hope.

We Have Eternal Life in Promise

We do not possess eternal life literally at this time. We must wait for judgment day and heaven. But we now possess it in promise. Let John speak:

> *And this is the promise which he promised us even the life eternal* (1 John 2:25).

We have it in promise, but we still look for the reality of it in the next life. That's why Jude could say:

> *keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

In a sense we have the life now. We have it in prospect, in promise, in hope. But we must wait until heaven to possess it in its fullest reality. Therefore, we look "unto eternal life" as we look for the mercy of Jesus Christ in that great day. That is also why Paul could say the following to Timothy:

> *Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called...* (1 Timothy 6:12).

Timothy was a Christian. He knew that in some sense he, as all Christians, had eternal life (1 John 5:13). But obviously he did not actually have it, or he would not need to "lay hold on" it by fighting the "good fight." No, we have eternal life. We have it in prospect, in promise and in hope. As for the reality of it, we see it not. But with patience we wait for it, trying to lay hold on it by fighting the good fight.

Jerry Moffitt
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GNOSTICISM

I. Gnosis.

A. Word choice: The New Testament writers were determined to use prominent words of their time which were used by the people they addressed.

B. Gnosis: The word usually denotes the act of knowing or the objective knowledge thus acquired.

C. False Gnosis: This implies a knowledge which is false. It is another knowledge which is not true.

D. Authority: The true Gnostic (Gnosis) submitted himself without reserve to the authority of Scripture.

E. Out of Reach: The false Gnostic (Gnosis) claimed to be above the reach of the ordinary.

F. Gnostic: This term, as used in these lessons, will refer to the False Gnostic (the heretic).

G. Salvation: The Gnostic was so zealous for knowledge he would even give up his Christian salvation for it.

II. Heretical Gnosticism.

A. General Character.

1. Higher Knowledge - Their common ground was an acquisition of a knowledge higher than that of ordinary believers.

2. Aim - It was to construct a theory of the universe, cosmogony and redemption.

B. External Origin.

1. Universal thought - From the old fables and philosophies some found what they thought was a uniting bond of truth and the elements of a universal religion.

2. The result - A number of new systems of religious philosophy sprung up immediately in different countries and exhibited similar characteristics.

3. Oriental elements - Modern historians feel the Oriental elements are the strongest found in the Gnostic systems.

4. Various roots - There were several contributing ideas:

   a. Alexandrian Judaism.

   b. Dualistic Persianism.

   c. Pantheistic Buddhism.

   d. Platonic.

   e. Pythagorean.

   f. Brahminic.

C. Classification - There are many ways to classify them and this is only one of them:

1. Those who combined Christianity with Judaism and heathenism.

2. Those who entirely separated them.

3. Those who identify it with Judaism but are opposed to heathenism.

D. History.

1. After Pentecost - During the years following Pentecost great freedom was given to religious thought among the Christians as long as the moral and religious life of the people was not perverted.

2. Second Century - This is the time when Gnosticism in its many forms flourished under very capable teachers.

3. Third Century - During this time Gnosticism lost most of its power even though some individual sects were prospering and a few new ones were springing up.

E. General Principles.

1. Fundamental ideas - There were three ideas that were fundamental to all:

    a. A supreme being, unconnected with matter and incapable of being affected by it.

    b. Spirit is good while matter is evil, the source of evil and is opposed to God.

    c. A series of beings (demigods) between the supreme God and matter.

    d. No resurrection of the dead,

    e. Christ did not come in the flesh and

    f. God is in heaven and has no contact with the world.

2. The Gnostic knowledge - There were four general sources for their knowledge:

    a. Tradition.

    b. Christian Scripture.

    c. Writings of other “enlightened” persons.

    d. Writings of heathen poets and philosophers.

F. Literature.

1. Original - The original authorities were the ecclesiastical writers of that period, i.e.: Dead Sea Scrolls, etc.

2. Modern - Literature on Gnosticism is very abundant.

G. Gnosticism WAS NOT a homogeneous system of either religion or philosophy. It actually consisted of many groups holding different opinions drawn from a great variety of sources.

H. The Gnostic replaced the question, “What must I do to be saved,” with other questions requiring special knowledge such as:

1. What is the origin of evil?

2. How is the primitive order of the universe to be restored?

I. They addressed the problems of:

1. God and the universe,

2. God and providence,

3. Christ,

4. Intermediaries,

5. Redemption and

6. Revelation.

J. The Gnostic understood salvation to be the “knowing” of these questions and problems along with others. But they also had to know their answers.

K. For a time Christians had referred to themselves as “true gnostics” with the implication that through Christ they had learned the true wisdom.

L. Many Christians were led away by their teachings.

M. Gnosticism reached its greatest height about 150.

N. They were finally defeated about 200 and then began forming their own societies outside the church.

O. In meeting their threats, the Christians were forced to distinguish very carefully between genuinely inspired letters and forged works as well as heretical writings.

P. The Greek and Roman gods were identified with their beliefs.

Q. Cult practices from all parts of the empire were either adopted or adapted.

R. Some of their theories go way back into antiquity from Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia and India.

S. Some of their beliefs can be traced back to Zoroastrianism.

T. They pictured the spirit of man, stripped of all foreign accretions, finally reaching God. This is an idea which is comparable to the Hindu doctrine of Nirvana.

U. Add to the Greek mythology and philosophy, the Old and New Testaments, along with the body of apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature (which developed immediately before and after the time of Christ) and you have the immediate background for Gnosticism.

V. It appears no Gnostic group claimed any exclusiveness as opposed to any other group.

W. Some adopted the Docetic teaching which claimed Christ only “seemed” to dwell in a body of flesh and blood. He only had the appearance of being human. His earthly life and the suffering on the cross were unreal.

X. Some believed the Adoptionist (Cerenthian) that Jesus was born an ordinary man, but at his baptism the Messiah took up abode in his body and stayed there until he was nailed to the cross. At that time the Messiah left him and Jesus died as an ordinary man.

Y. They divided men into three categories:

1. Animals (or material men) predestined to destruction (non-Christians).

2. Psychic men who could attain salvation with the help of ordinary Christians and

3. The spiritual men who were destined to eternal life.

Z. Jesus is the revealer of gnostic wisdom. He taught these secret traditions to the elect (apostles).

AA. They claimed their secret knowledge was superior to the Old and New Testaments.

1. They also claimed the ordinary believer was not capable of this knowledge.

2. You could receive salvation only after you had received this special knowledge.

3. This special knowledge was based on special revelation.

4. The Gnostics, in their pride, turned the gospel into a new philosophy.

5. Gnosticism puts “knowledge” in the place of “faith.”

BB. Man was saved by specific knowledge NOT by faith; NOT general knowledge BUT knowledge of the Gnostic Myth. THIS WAS ESSENTIALLY SELF-KNOWLEDGE! This makes salvation meritorious by making man’s mental efforts the basis of salvation NOT the blood of Christ.

CC. All Gnostic teachings were a part of the redeeming knowledge which gathers together:

1. The object of knowledge (the divine nature).

2. The means of knowledge (the redeeming gnosis) and

3. The knower himself.

DD. Many Gnostics insisted that ignorance, not sin, was what involved a person in suffering.

EE. Sin is not the act and the disposition of the human will in rebellion against God.

1. It is only a physical fact or quality inherent in the body and in matter everywhere.

2. Redemption, therefore, does not consist in the work of Christ for us on the cross, nor the applying of the benefits of that work by the Holy Spirit in the renewal of the man.

3. Redemption is simply each man’s efforts to secure emancipation from the flesh (from physical evil).

FF. All who had gone beyond and into Gnosis had gone beyond the church’s teaching and had transcended the authority of the hierarchy.

GG. Whoever achieves Gnosis becomes “no longer a Christian, but a Christ.”

HH. Only one’s personal experience offered the ultimate criterion of truth. AND this took precedence over all secondhand testimony and all tradition - EVEN Gnostic tradition.

II. All of this is comparable to the modern Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons etc. who claim guidance from the Holy Spirit apart from the Scriptures or those who would rather be guided by their feelings than by God's word.

JJ. Jesus was also in need of salvation in order that He might not be held back by the "deficiency in which he had been placed."

KK. Doctrines common to most Gnostics (from the "Gospel of Truth"):

1. Not-knowing, forgetfulness, oblivion of the Father was the "original sin."

2. Jesus is a savior, a savior by Gnosis, NOT by vicarious suffering.

3. Man is saved by knowledge - "Whosoever has knowledge understands from whence he come and whither he goes."

LL. Their god was an ineffable, transcendent god - "Above the universe dwells the prime Father who is also called Bytthos and Chaos. He is invisible, incomprehensible, above time, and dwells unbegotten in eternal peace."

MM. If an ineffable god is to have contact with a material world, it must come through a chain of intermediate beings. Each one of these intermediate beings is less divine and more earthly than the one before it.

1. The lowest god in this chain of 15 pairs is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

2. Therefore, the material universe and man were created by this inferior god named Jehovah.

3. Unbeknown to Jehovah, the Ineffable God placed a spark of the divine in man (known as "a spark of light").

4. This spark of light is described as being in "ignorance," or "oblivion," or "forgetfulness" or "drunkenness."

5. This meant that man's soul was unconscious of its true nature and destiny.

6. From this state man can be redeemed only by having the ignorance removed, the oblivion or forgetfulness changed to wakefulness and awareness, the drunkenness replaced by sobriety.

7. In other words, the Gnostic must come to himself, know himself and thus be redeemed.

8. An offshoot of this is that Jesus is Jehovah (which is true), but that Jesus is definitely a created god (or being). This is exactly what the Jehovah's Witnesses teach today!

NN. The redemption guaranteed by gnosis is realized for the first time at physical death.

1. This is when they are actually released from their physical bodies and are able to set out on their way to their true home.

2. This is called the "ascent of the soul" or the "heavenly journey of the soul."

OO. The planets were often viewed as seven heavenly wardens who attempted to keep the soul from completing its journey to "bliss."

PP. The soul must overcome these wardens or give the magic password which enabled it to pass on to the next sphere.

QQ. The Gnostic religions failed to establish a safe basis for practical morals:

1. On the one extreme, a spiritual pride obscured the sense of sin. This brought about antinomianism which often ended in sensuality and debaucheries.

2. On the other extreme, an over-strained sense of sin often led the Gnostics to ascribe nature to Satan, to abhor the body as the seat of evil and to practice extreme asceticism.

RR. Gnosticism, not being from God, could not, did not and still cannot provide salvation for mankind!

SECOND JOHN
INTRODUCTION

I. Authorship

A. I want to make it clear that God is the author of this book, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). The writer whom God used to reveal this epistle was the apostle John.

B. The writer of this epistle is identified simply as “the elder” (2 John 1:1), but almost all conservative scholars believe this refers to the apostle John.

1. It is unlikely that the title of “the elder” is an official title.

a. In the Lord’s church there is never just one elder, or one elder who is raised up over the other elders.

b. If it was “an elder” instead of “the elder” then it could possibly be an official title.

2. Actually, it would have been better to translate this as “the aged, or older.”

C. The evidence on which this conclusion is based is abundant, coming from both external and internal sources.

D. There are also unmistakable similarities between this letter and the other writings of the apostle John.

1. We see the same vocabulary, thought patterns and writing style between 1, 2, 3 John and the Gospel of John.

a. Some believe that only the thoughts or concepts were given to the inspired writers, who were then left to express those ideas in their own words.

1) However, this view is incorrect. God’s Spirit guided the **words** themselves—while still employing the individual styles, vocabularies, and idioms of the prophets and apostles—to communicate precisely what God intended.

2) A clearer understanding of this letter comes when one

understands 1 John.

II. Destination - The "Elect Lady"

A. Literal view: This was a prominent Christian lady in the congregation. Perhaps the church met in her house.

1. The first rule of Bible hermeneutics (the method or principles of interpretation) is to understand any part of Scripture literally unless there is sufficient evidence to indicate otherwise.

2. The reference to the lady's children is quite normal and makes sense if John addressed an actual lady of the congregation and these children were adults.

3. The greeting from the lady's sister's children in verse 13 also makes sense if taken in a literal sense.

4. According to this interpretation the apostle is writing to a lady of some importance to prepare the way for his coming visit and to warn her and the congregation of certain dangers.

5. The reason that John addresses this "elect Lady" sometimes in the plural and sometimes in the singular could be that John is writing to both the woman and her household or close circle.

B. Alternate view: The "Elect Lady" refers to a congregation.

1. This view notes that the personification of the church as "she" is in harmony with other New Testament passages where congregations are referred to in the feminine (compare Ephesians 5:29-33; 2 Corinthians 11:2-4).

2. This view also highlights a strong contrast with John's third letter, in which several members are named, since in this letter neither the "Elect Lady," her children, nor her sister and nephews are named as often occurs in a personal letter.

3. This view also assumes that the subject-matter is more suited for a congregation with its strong warnings against false teachers.

4. It is also noted that in verses 3, 8, 10 and 12 the word "you" is in the plural which is unusual if written to an individual, but would be proper if addressed to a congregation.

C. Conclusion:

1. The fact is, nobody knows to whom the epistle is written, but if we assume that the elect lady was the church, and her children the members of the church, who then was the sister, and what did she and her children represent (verse 13)?

2. It seems that the most logical solution is that the “elect lady” was a well-known lady of some importance. John is preparing the way for his coming visit and warning her and those close to her of certain dangers.

III. Occasion and Purpose

A. The false teachers mentioned in verse 7 are likely the same individuals or the same group of deceivers addressed in 1 John. These teachers denied essential truths concerning the person and work of Christ and were actively spreading doctrinal error among the churches.

B. John wrote in order to warn his readers beforehand about the danger of these false teachers and to guard them against the spread of false doctrine. His purpose to protect the brethren. He wanted to encourage them to remain steadfast in the truth.

C. At the same time, he wanted them to practice genuine Christian hospitality toward faithful Christians and traveling ministers of the gospel. However, he warned them not to extend fellowship or support to false teachers.

IV. Date

A. The date for the writing of this epistle appears to be soon after 1 John was written which was about 90-95 A.D.

V. Theme

A. The main theme of 2 John is the close relationship between truth and love.

B. True love is shown through obedience to God's commands, and the need to be on guard against false teachers (especially those who deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh).

C. This short letter develops this theme through several key teachings:

1. **Truth and Love Belong Together:** John teaches that Christian love must be based on the truth of the gospel. Love without truth becomes misguided, and truth without love becomes harsh. Genuine Christian faith requires both.

2. **Love Is Shown Through Obedience:** John explains that love is more than a feeling. True love is demonstrated by obeying God's commands and living according to His teachings. It is an active way of life, not just an emotion.

3. **Beware of False Teachers:** John warns Christians about people who spread false teachings, especially those who denied that Jesus Christ came to earth in a physical body. Christians must be able to recognize and reject teachings that contradict the truth.

4. **Setting Appropriate Boundaries:** John advises Christians not to support or encourage false teachers. Since offering support implies agreement with their message, helping those who spread false doctrine causes a person to share responsibility for the damage their teachings cause to others.

VI. Key Verse

A. 2 John 1:9, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”

SECOND JOHN
OUTLINE

I. Introduction 1-3

II. Walking in Truth 4-6

III. False Teachers 7-9

IV. Deny Hospitality 10-11

V. Close 12-13

SECOND JOHN EXPOSITION

I. INTRODUCTION 1-3

1:1 The elder - The Greek phrase here (O PRESBUTEROS) includes the article (the) showing that this is a person rather than a title or position. It should be remembered that the elders of a congregation always ruled in the plural. There was never one elder who ruled over the other elders. Therefore, an elder of a congregation would not refer to himself as "**the**" elder. So, why does John refer to himself as the elder?

a. The term elder can be used to refer to one who is older (aged). John was an old man at the time of writing.

b. This makes sense when we consider his relationship of a spiritual father to the Christians he was writing to.

c. Therefore, it is safe to say that he calls himself the elder because of his age.

To the elect lady and her children - Is this "elect lady" a person or a congregation?

a. John addresses this "elect Lady" sometimes in the plural and sometimes in the singular:

1) Singular: verses 1, 4, 5, 13.

2) Plural: verses 6, 8, 10, 12.

3) This fact is used to argue that this is a congregation.

b. However, it could be that John is writing to a woman and her household or close circle. The singular is used when addressing her directly, since she is the primary recipient. The plural appears when he refers to her children, household members, or others associated with her, or when giving instructions that apply to the group connected to her.

c. Some also suggest that even in a personal letter, John may naturally shift between addressing the individual and the broader group of Christians she influences or hosts (for example, in a house church setting). So, the plural does not necessarily require the "elect lady" to be a congregation—it can simply reflect the fact that more than one person is involved in the situation being discussed.

Whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth - The phrase "in truth" means that John's love was grounded in and motivated by the truth of God's word. John loved this woman and her children because of their faithfulness and devotion to the truth. Since the truth of God abides forever, the love that is founded upon it is enduring and permanent.

> All who love God and His truth will likewise love His people wherever they may be found. The expression "all those who have known the truth" further shows that the apostle is speaking of brotherly love shared among Christians.

1:2 Because of the truth - This phrase gives a clear and powerful explanation of why faithful disciples love one another. It is the truth dwelling within them that produces and sustains that love. Only those who genuinely love the truth are able to love others in truth.

Which abides in us - Literally, this refers to the truth continually dwelling within them, and us, if we are Christians.

And will be with us forever - "Forever" is into the ages. Truth, like love and light, will exist forever as they are attributes of deity.

1:3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you - Some see a progression here in John's greeting:

a. Grace - the source of all gifts and blessings.

b. Mercy - that which is received when one responds in obedience to God's plan of salvation (grace).

c. Peace - that which passes all understanding now and will be permanently ours in heaven if we are faithful.

From God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father -

a. These blessings spring forth from God the Father and come to us through Jesus His Son.

b. They may be obtained from no other source.

c. John urges these Christians, as well as Christians today, to remain faithful to the truth they have received and to continually demonstrate the love that flows from it.

In truth and love - The word “truth” occurs five times in 2 John and six times in 3 John.

II. WALKING IN THE TRUTH 4-6

1:4 I rejoiced greatly - This is referring back to the time when John had met these “children.”

That I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father - “Walking” is often used in the Bible to describe a person’s way of life or conduct. It refers not to a single act, but to an ongoing, habitual pattern that steadily moves toward its goal. This does not imply that her other children were not faithful. It could be John had only met some of her children.

1:5 And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another - The Greek term translated as “plead” carries a stronger force than the word “ask” or “beseech” used in the KJV. It refers to a request made with rightful authority by the one making the appeal.

John recognizes that he himself is included in the responsibility to obey and practice this command to love by stating, “that **we** love one another.”

For an explanation of the phrase “new commandment,” please examine the comments on 1 John 2:7–8. The command to love was not itself a “new commandment.” Its newness was seen in Christ’s perfect example of love.

> John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; **as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1:6 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 - “Love” for God is seen by walking in His commandments.

a. The commandment to love is a summary commandment.

b. It includes all that we are to do in response to what God has revealed about Himself and about His will!

The phrase “you should walk in it” underscores the importance of obedience.

a. Emotion without obedience is empty.

b. Love without obedience becomes misguided zeal.

c. Duty without love turns into mere formalism.

Where love is absent, keeping God's commandments feels burdensome and wearisome. But for faithful Christians, obedience is not oppressive, because love makes it a joy.

III. FALSE TEACHERS 7-9

1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh - The Greek word for "deceivers" (PLANOS) means, "ones who lead others into wrong actions, not just to wrong opinions."

> This word also suggests wanderers or rovers moving about with the intent of seducing and misleading anyone they can persuade to embrace their teachings.

This is a deceiver and an antichrist - "Antichrist" can refer to either one who comes "instead of" Christ or one who "opposes" Christ. In the Greek, "Antichrist" is shown to be a quality or category, not a specific person or group.

The antichrist is better understood not as a single individual, but as a principle—an ongoing force that opposes Christ. This principle can be seen at work in people throughout every generation who openly resist God and His Son (compare Matthew 24:5, 24–27; Acts 20:29; 2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Peter 2:1).

a. All teachers of false doctrine—no matter what they teach, what topic they focus on, or even if they disagree with one another—are united in one respect: they all oppose Christ and His kingdom.

b. The driving influence behind every false teacher is a spirit opposed to Christ, whether they realize it or not.

1:8 Look to yourselves - John is telling them to look into their own hearts and minds to see if they have the defenses necessary to combat these false teachers.

That we do not lose those things we worked for - This verse clearly teaches three important truths:

a. That apostasy is possible.

b. That we must regularly examine our own spiritual condition (compare 2 Corinthians 13:5).

c. That we need to remain constantly alert and on guard against any form of attack from Satan.

To listen to these false teachers and follow them would mean that all their Christian service would be wasted, and they would lose the reward and lasting spiritual fruit that should have come from it.

But that we may receive a full reward - What is the "reward" in this verse? At first, we may think this is the eternal reward in heaven. However, no worker for Christ receives eternal life as a reward based on how many people they convert or for how faithful those converts remain. Instead, the reward spoken of in this context is the present joy of seeing those who they have helped to obey the gospel remain faithful.

1:9 Whoever transgresses - John's point is that, in reality, these false teachers have not **progressed** at all, but have **transgressed** by abandoning the true faith.

This may be somewhat of a sarcastic comment from John on how the Gnostics proudly presented their teachings as "advanced" or superior.

And does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God - The false teachers claimed they were progressive, advanced thinkers and men of open and adventurous minds.

a. But John insists that no matter how far they think they have gone, they have actually only left the truth behind.

b. To truly advance one must abide in the teachings of Jesus Christ or he loses contact with the very foundation of the faith.

c. The verbs "transgresses" and "does not abide" are descriptive of the same act.

False teachers almost always claim –

a. To be progressive,

b. To have advanced knowledge and

c. To have a monopoly on true scholarship.

They often change the meaning of words, using familiar terms but assigning them different meanings. Sometimes even a slight shift in meaning can lead to tragic consequences—lost souls!

What does the phrase "the doctrine **of** Christ" mean? Notice these two views:

a. It could mean, the doctrine **about** Christ. If this is true it is speaking about the false doctrines of the Gnostics concerning the nature of Christ.

b. It could mean the doctrine **that belongs to** Christ. In other words, it refers to the whole Christian faith, since Christ is its source and author. As such, it is an infallible standard, and any departure from it necessarily results in apostasy.

[For additional information please see the appendices - THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST - SECOND JOHN 9-11 by Bob Waldron.]

He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son - The one who "abides in the doctrine of Christ" is the one who continues to abide in the teachings of Christ.

a. This is the person who recognizes its unchangeable authority and does not deviate from it in any direction.

b. He understands that Christ's teachings—passed on through His apostles—forms the complete and final body of truth for this present age. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it (Revelation 22:18-19), and it therefore serves as the infallible standard of Christianity.

IV. DENY HOSPITALITY 10-11

1:10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine - The Greek construction shows this is not a hypothetical case. It should be: "When anyone comes to you!"

There are two admonitions, both negative:

a. Do not receive him into your house - John is not forbidding hospitality to strangers, only to false teachers.

b. Nor greet him - This means do not show approval of the actions and teachings of the one being greeted.

1:11 For he who greets him shares in his evil deeds - It shows that we have no right to encourage false teachers, even by expressing good wishes toward them in their current state. If we do, we share in their wrongdoing and become participants (have fellowship) in their evil deeds, effectively joining them in their error.

V. CLOSE 12-13

1:12 Having many things to write to you - John has many more things he wishes to share with her and them.

I do not wish to do so with paper and ink - The word "paper" refers to a leaf of parchment or papyrus.

But I hope to come to you and speak face to face - John knows the value of personal contact!

That our joy may be full - This joy includes all God's blessings. This is the greatest of wishes!

1:13 The children of your elect sister greet you - There is no reliable information about the identity of this sister. However, since John refers to her as "elect," it is most likely that she was a faithful disciple and that she also had children who were devoted to the Lord.

> In that time, exchanging greetings was a common expression of goodwill. It was therefore natural for her children—who were apparently with John—to join in sending friendly greetings to their mother's sister.

Amen - In Scripture, "Amen" can appear at the beginning of a statement with the meaning "truly" or "certainly" (see Matthew 5:18; Mark 3:28; John 3:3). When it is used at the end of a statement or prayer, it expresses the sense of "so be it" or "may it be fulfilled." As an adjective, it conveys the idea of something that is firm, reliable, or true.

END

APPENDIX

The Doctrine of Christ.....

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST
SECOND JOHN 9-11
By: Bob Waldron

INTRODUCTION

A. This section of Scripture is recognized as a "problem" passage because of the difficulty in interpreting the phrase, *the doctrine of Christ,* (v. 9).

1. Some render it *Christ's doctrine*, seeing the Greek genitive as a genitive *subjective.*

2. Others believe the Greek genitive should be a genitive *objective*, thus rendering the phrase *doctrine about Christ*.

3. Either rendering is allowed by Greek grammar.

B. Also, at stake here is what rules we will use for biblical interpretation. Will we force the Scriptures to fit our practice or personal belief? Or will we allow the Scriptures to speak for themselves?

I. ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF INTERPRETING IT AS *CHRIST'S TEACHING*.

A. Some Say Such a Rendering Is Consistent with New Testament Usage.

1. John R. W. Stott, in reference to Westcott and Brooke, wrote: "the 'usage of the N.T.' requires that the genitive be interpreted not as objective, 'the teaching about Christ,' but as subjective, 'Christ's teaching.'"[1]

2. Westcott added that "the usage of the N.T. is uniformly in favor" of such an interpretation and then he cited Revelation 2:14-15; John 18:19 and Acts 2:42 as examples.[2]

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[1] J. R. W. Stott, Tyndale Commentaries, *The Epistles of John: an introduction and commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 212.

[2] Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), p. 230.

3. Chart 1, which follows, demonstrates the force of the argument.

Matthew 16:12	της the	διδαχης teaching	των (of)	φαρισαιων the Pharisees
Mark 12:38	τη the	διδαχη teaching		αυτου (of) Him
John 18:19	της the	διδαχης teaching		αυτου (of) Him
Acts 2:42	τη the	διδαχη teaching	των (of)	αποστολων the apostles
Revelation 2:14	την the	διδαχην teaching		βαλααμ (of) Balaam
Revelation 2:15	την the	διδαχην teaching	των (of)	νικολαιτων the Nicolaitans
2 John 9	τη the τη the	διδαχη teaching διδαχη teaching	του (of) του (of)	χριστου the Christ χριστου the Christ

4. Some argue that because in all the other passages the genitive is interpreted as a genitive subjective, 2 John 9 should follow suit.

B. Some say this interpretation is consistent with the context of 2 John 9.

Many see the principle theme of 2 John to be *truth* and cite the following references:

Verse 1: "Whom I love in truth;" "and not only I, but also all who know the truth."

Verse 2: "for the sake of the truth."

Verse 3: "in truth and love."

Verse 4: "I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth."

Verse 6: "walk according to His commandments."

People who see this widespread use of the word *truth* believe 2 John 9 is a general statement about all who do not follow Christ's teachings. They argue that the context favors the rendering of the genitive subjective: *Christ's teaching.*

C. This Interpretation is Also Consistent with Most Scholars.

1. Thayer said 2 John 9 referred to "the doctrine which has God, Christ, the Lord, for its author and supporter."[3]

2. Westcott agreed and added, "the doctrine which Christ brought ...This sense seems better than *the doctrine of* (concerning) *the Christ*."[4]

3. A. T. Robertson declared that the *doctrine of Christ* is "not the teaching about Christ, but that of Christ."[5]

4. Our own Guy N. Woods commented, "The 'teaching of Christ' here is not teaching about Christ, or teaching which is Christian in substance or nature; it is the teaching which Christ did personally and through those whom he inspired."[6]

Most all of those who favor the genitive subjective interpretation base their arguments on one or more of these points: (1) it is consistent with New Testament usage; (2) it is consistent with John's appeal for truth; and (3) most scholars agree with such an interpretation. But are these arguments substantial enough to warrant the conclusion that 2 John 9 is speaking about Christ's teaching?

II. ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF *DOCTRINE ABOUT CHRIST*

A. New Testament Usage Is Determined by Context.

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[3] J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 4th edition), p. 144.

[4] Westcott, *op cit.*

[5] Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933), vol. 6, p. 254.

[6] Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John and Jude* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1966), p. 347.

Earlier we looked at Chart 1 which demonstrated the harmony of the Greek words and their interpretation as genitive subjectives. However, they were not so interpreted because of some rule of Greek grammar but because their respective contexts demanded such as an interpretation.

1. Notice that before the phrase “the teaching of the Pharisees” (Mt 16:12) we find “the leaven of the Pharisees.” The Greek grammar is exactly parallel and therefore the phrase could not have been translated *the teaching about the Pharisees* unless we translated the first phrase *the leaven about the Pharisees*. The context determines our interpretation.

2. In Mark 12:38 we must translate τη διδαχη αυτου as *His teaching* and not as *teaching about Him*. It would make no sense to say *“And in the teaching about Him He was saying: ‘Beware of the Scribes*...’” It must be interpreted, *“And in His teaching He was saying: ‘Beware of the scribes*...’” Once again, our interpretation is determined is determined by the context.

3. John 18:19 says, “Then the high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching.” Again, we have two grammatically parallel statements. It is not *disciples about Him*, but *disciples of Him*, or *His disciples*. Likewise, it must be *teaching of Him*, or *His teaching*. The context would prohibit any other interpretation.

4. In Acts 2:42 we find “they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles.” It could not be *they continued steadfastly in the teaching about the apostles*, for in what teachings *about* the apostles could they continue? Teachings *about* the apostles are few and easily learned and would not require steadfastness and continuance. To continue in teachings about the apostles would make too much of the apostles and not enough of God. The context requires the genitive subjective.

5. Revelation 2:14 talks about “the teaching of Balaam.” It cannot mean *teaching about Balaam*, for the verse continues “who taught Balak to throw a stumbling block before the sons of Israel.” In other words, the verse tells of one of the teachings of Balaam that was condemned by the Lord. He was condemning the church in Pergamum for the same reason. The context demands the genitive subjective, “the teaching *of* Balaam.”

6. Revelation 2:15 mentions the "teaching of the Nicolaitans," and this could be translated by either the subjective or objective genitive if it were not for one important point. The verse begins with "So you *also* have those holding to the teachings of the Nicolaitans," which makes the grammatical construction of verse 15 parallel to that of verse 14: "You have those holding to the teaching of Balaam...So you also have those holding to the teaching of the Nicolaitans." Using the genitive subjunctive in verse 14 dictates that we use it in verse 15.

7. One important principle of biblical interpretation states: "Always interpret a passage in harmony with the context."[7] We have seen this principle followed in each of the above examples. Now we shall see that to apply that principle to 2 John 9, we must interpret the genitive as objective, *doctrine about Christ*, rather than subjective, *Christ's doctrine*.

B. The Interpretation *Doctrine About Christ* is More Consistent with the Primary Context of 2 John.

1. What is the background of John's writings?

Nearly all scholars agree that John addressed the Gnostics both in his Gospel account and his epistles. Oriental Gnosticism had its own prophets, its own concept of salvation and belief in a Redeemer who was a light bringer. Basically, the Gnostics taught that God is light (good) and world is darkness (evil). They believed a Redeemer needed to come from heaven to earth to rescue the soul from its prison of flesh and conduct it to heaven.

Some of these Gnostics became Christians but continued to live by their prior beliefs. They denied that God could come to earth in human flesh for then He, too, would be contaminated and His soul held captive in a sinful body. Therefore, it would have been an impossibility for God to have been subjected to the agony and humiliation of the cross.

So, these false teachers were denying the incarnation and sacrificial death of Christ (God the Son). They advocated, instead, that Christ only *seemed* to do this. These were labeled Docetics ("Seemists"). They taught that the man Jesus was not Christ, not divine. Some declared that Christ's divine nature only came upon Jesus at his

[7] W. Robert Palmer, *How to Understand the Bible* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1965), p. 50.

baptism and left just prior to the scourging and crucifixion. Yet it was not so much a divine Jesus to which the Gnostics objected as it was to an earthly God. “They might believe in the God-likeness of Christ; they could not believe in the Christlikeness of God.”[8]

Most likely these Gnostics had come to these conclusions in order to protect the holiness of God, but it resulted in tearing the heart out of Christianity. After all, if you eliminate the incarnation and sacrificial death of the Son of God, what do you have left? The divinity of Jesus Christ is the core of the Gospel. Take Christ out of the Gospel and there is no Gospel left. The Good News without the truth of John 3:16 is no good news at all.

One other point must be made here regarding these Gnostics. They lived to the measure of their beliefs. Empty Christ of His divine nature and you lose a valuable reason to live a pure life. Couple this with the idea that what you do in the flesh is evil but that you can be saved by what you think (gnosis = knowledge) and you set the stage for ungodly, animal-like existence guided by brute passions. Such were the Gnostics. The belief in the dichotomy of soul and flesh cheapened God’s demand for purity. And to top it off, they acted as if *they* were superior because of a knowledge of and insights into the nature of God. What a blight they were upon the early church!

Another rule of biblical interpretation states, “An interpretation of a passage should always conform to the environment of the author.”[9] Now we understand why John began his Gospel account with John 1:1-14 and why he included the words of 3:16-21.

2. Let’s take a look at the context of 2 John.

   a. A brief study of John’s second letter reveals the following structure:

      Salutation (vv. 1-3),
      Opening Comments About the Problem (vv. 4-6),
      Treatment of the Problem (vv. 7-11),
      Conclusion (vv. 12-13).

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[8] George Arthur Buttrick, ed. *The Interpreter’s Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), vol. 12, p. 246.

[9] Palmer, *op cit*.

b. It is quite simple to see that a definite break comes at verse 7. Up to that point John was speaking only in general terms. Beginning at verse 7 he addressed a specific problem and did not finish with it until verse 11.

c. Notice, too, that all the references to *truth* which we discussed earlier fall into verses 1-6, three of them in the salutation. None occur in verses 7-11 which form the *immediate* context of verse 9. Verses 1-6, and the references to *truth*, form at most, only the *remote* context. Any understanding of 2 John 9 must first deal with the immediate context of vv. 7-11.

d. Tracing the thoughts of these verses we encounter the following:

Verse 7: Deceivers (antichrists) have gone out into the world denying that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.

Verse 8: Be careful that you do not follow after them and thus lose all that you have worked for.

Verse 9: Because anyone who goes too far and does not abide in this teaching about Christ (namely that He came in the flesh) does not have God. How can God be Father if He never had a Son?

Verse 10: If anyone comes to you and does not bring this crucial doctrine of Christ's nature, do not even receive him into your home or greet him.

Verse 11: For the one who wishes him godspeed participates in his evil deeds.

3. Now, let's pay close attention to some parallel passages from John's writings.

An important rule of biblical interpretation tells us, "Always allow parallel passages to explain one another." This is extremely important in understanding the parable of Jesus and the Hebrew parallelism of the Psalms and Proverbs, for example. It is equally important for the study of 2 John 9.

The following parallel passages have more to do with the immediate context of 2 John 9 than do verses 1-6 and 12-13 of the same book. They cast light on each other and upon the proper interpretation of each.

1 John 2:18-26	Many anti-Christs have arisen	They went out from us	Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the anti-Christ, the one who denies the Father and the Son	Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. Abide in what you heard - you will also abide in the Son and the Father
1 John 4:1-4	Test the spirits Many false prophets	have gone out into the world	Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God	
2 John 1:7-9	Many deceivers This is the deceiver and the anti-christ	have gone out into the world who	do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God,	Watch yourselves that you may not lose...but receive a full reward. The one who abides in the teaching has both the Father and Son.

Look in the third column of the text to find 2 John 9, “the teaching of Christ.” By looking at the parallel expressions of this phrase we learn that it means that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:18-26) and that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (1 John 4:1-4; 2 John 7-9).

By its immediate context and by its parallel passages *teachings of Christ* must be understood as *doctrine about Christ*.

SUMMARY

We have seen that some prefer to render 2 John 9, *Christ's teachings*. They claim that such is required to be consistent with New Testament usage. What we have learned, however, is that New Testament usage requires us to interpret the genitive in light of its context. This is much more important than merely interpreting all genitives alike.

Further, we have observed that the effort to tie "doctrine of Christ" to John's mention of truth must remain a weak attempt to take 2 John 9 out of its immediate context.

There is no reason, either grammatically, or for consistency with other New Testament occurrences, or contextually, to interpret "doctrine of Christ" by *Christ's teaching*. To do so is to misunderstand the force of the passage and make it say something that was not intended. But what of the argument that such a rendering is consistent with the majority of biblical scholars?

First, let's observe that not all scholars are certain how this passage should be interpreted. Barnes was not sure what it meant.[10] Adam Clarke ignored the question altogether.[11] And J. W. Roberts draws no conclusion.[12]

Second, some scholars are in favor of the rendering, *doctrine about Christ: The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll is strongly in favor of this interpretation.[13] Kenneth Weust in his *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* wrote, "the teaching which recognizes Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior. We have a genitive of reference, 'teaching with reference to Christ.'"[14] But in the final

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[10] Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 365.

[11] Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary* (New York: Abingdon Press, n.d.), vol. 6, p. 937.

[12] J. W. Roberts, The Living Word Commentary, Everett Ferguson, ed., *The Letters of John* (Austin: R. B. Sweet Co., Inc., 1968), pp. 163-164.

[13] W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961), vol. 5, pp. 202-203.

[14] Kenneth S. Weust, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), vol. 4, p. 206.

analysis let God be true and every man a liar![15] The important consideration is not what men say— though never let us be so proud as not to learn from others—but what God says.

WHAT HAVE WE LOST?

What have we lost by interpreting 2 John 9 as *the doctrine about Christ*? Really, we have not lost anything but perhaps a mistaken understanding of 2 John 9.

False teachers of a different brand than we find in Second John are elsewhere condemned. Our treatment of false teachers in general is elsewhere described. We are not robbed of our biblical defense against those who corrupt the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. With the storehouse of the following passages no one can say he is bankrupt before false teachers - Matthew 7:15-23; 15:7-9; Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 4:1-3; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:3-4; Titus 1:10-14; 3:10-11.

A WORD OF CAUTION

One further word of exhortation is needed at this point. Some suggest that although 2 John 9 does refer to the doctrine about Christ's divinity, it is nevertheless a true statement about any error from the teachings of God's word. They wish to apply this passage to any false teachers. I caution you about such a practice. It is very loose biblical interpretation and will result in a general misunderstanding of the passage. Such has already been done and has resulted in 2 John 9 being considered a "difficult passage."

Another example of the misapplication of Scripture is found in our treatment of Jesus' words in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst." Preachers have for too long applied this to the small groups that meets for midweek prayer meeting. Hardly a member today realizes that this passage does not apply to a worship gathering but to a gathering for the purpose of withdrawing church fellowship from an unrepentant brother. Is it true that Jesus is present in our worship services no matter how few are gathered? Certainly. Can we therefore use this verse for such an application? Never! The cost is too high. We cease being biblical in our exegesis and interpretation of God's Word and we create a biblically ignorant brotherhood. Let us go back to the Bible. Let us never be a stumbling block to the restoration of New Testament Christianity. Let us do Bible things in Bible ways and apply Bible things in Bible ways.

[15] Romans 3:4.

THIRD JOHN
INTRODUCTION

I. Authorship

A. I want to make it clear that God is the author of this book, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). The writer whom God used to reveal this epistle was the apostle John.

B. The writer of this epistle is identified simply as “the elder” (3 John 1:1), but almost all conservative scholars believe this refers to the apostle John. The evidence on which this conclusion is based is abundant.

1. It is doubtful that the title of “elder” is an official title.

2. It would have been better to translate this as “the aged” or “the older.”

3. To conclude that the apostle John is the writer is natural from the evidence.

a. Irenaeus tells us that the apostle John spent his later years in the city of Ephesus and served as a spiritual guide to the churches of Asia Minor from there (compare Revelation 1:4).

b. The evidence seems inescapable that the same writer composed both 2 and 3 John.

c. There would, in fact, be less ground for disputing 3 John than 2 John on the basis of literary form.

d. Our conclusion is that the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, is the writer of this epistle.

II. Destination

1. It may be assumed, as with 1 and 2 John, that this epistle was originally sent to the region of Asia Minor, especially around Ephesus.

III. Occasion and Purpose

A. This epistle is a personal correspondence to John’s good friend Gaius (3 John 1:1).

1. Gaius was a common name at that time, so we have no way of knowing for certain which specific individual is meant.

2. John valued Gaius for his commitment to the truth.

    a. Gaius was faithful to the truth in his teaching and manner of life (3 John 1:3-4).

    b. He also encouraged others in their works through his love and hospitality (3 John 1:5-8).

3. John's letter is designed to be an encouragement to Gaius and a warning against the trouble maker Diotrephes (3 John 1:2, 9).

B. John wanted his readers to show Christian hospitality.

1. Hospitality is a virtue needed by all Christians (Hebrews 13:1-2).

2. Traveling evangelists were particularly in need of such hospitality.

    a. Those who received John's letters were known for such loving care (3 John 1:5-8).

    b. But the apostle had also warned them against receiving and giving aid to any false teacher (2 John 1:10-11).

3. We also need the virtue of hospitality today.

    a. Our lives are often very isolated and impersonal.

    b. Christianity is an ongoing relationship between the believer and God, as well as with other Christians.

IV. Date

A. This was probably written soon after 1 and 2 John, which were written around 90-95 A.D.

V. Key Verse

A. 3 John 1:4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

THIRD JOHN
OUTLINE

I. Address and Salutation 1-4

II. New Testament Law of Missions 5-8

III. John's Apostolic Approval 9

IV. Domination of Diotrephes 10

V. Faithfulness of Demetrius 11-12

VI. Conclusion 13-14

THIRD JOHN EXPOSITION

I. ADDRESS AND SALUTATION..... 1-4

1:1 The elder - This was not an official title as an elder in the church. If he were an elder of the church, he would refer to himself as "an" elder, not "the" elder. The elders in a congregation are equal in authority; one is not over another. It would have been better to translate this as "the aged," or "the older."

Clearly, this is the same writer as 1st and 2nd John - the apostle John.

To the beloved Gaius - This was a common name and occurs in Acts 19:29; 20:4; Romans 16:23; 1 Corinthians 1:14.

a. It is not possible to determine if any two of these refer to the same person.

b. However, the term "beloved" tells us much about his character. He was dearly loved by the brethren.

Whom I love in truth - The apostle John shared in their feelings for Gaius. This statement is John's clear "stamp of approval."

1:2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things - In the Greek this phrase literally means, "to be led along a good road." In other words, "to get along well, to prosper, to succeed."

And be in health - John was praying for his physical well-being also.

Just as your soul prospers - The same word for "prosper" is used in both places in this verse.

a. This sets the standard for how wealthy one may safely become: only in proportion to spiritual well-being - "as your soul prospers."

b. It is clearly implied that if his physical health matched his spiritual health, he would be in very good condition indeed.

1:3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you -

a. "Came" and "testified" are both present participles and suggest action that was repeated.

b. In other words, John had often heard from others about the faithfulness of Gaius.

Just as you walk in the truth - How important is it to walk in the truth?

a. To be right with God we must walk in the truth.

b. We do this by walking in (obeying) God's commandments.

Consider the example of Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist (who preached and baptized in the wilderness).

> Luke 1:5-6, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth - John uses "children" as an expression of affection and care, not to indicate that they are his biological offspring.

> We experience great joy when we hear that those we have worked with (and perhaps even helped to convert) are remaining faithful to God.

II. NEW TESTAMENT LAW ON MISSIONS..... 5-8

1:5 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do - "You do faithfully whatever you do" means that whatever Gaius did, he did with sincerity and wholehearted commitment, not in a halfhearted way. He carried out his good works, "heartily, as to the Lord and not to men" (Colossians 3:23).

For the brethren and for strangers - His kindness toward both fellow Christians and strangers follows the principle of Galatians 6:10, where Paul encourages Christians to, "do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

1:6 Who have borne witness of your love before the church - These individuals are now witnesses to the love of Gaius. The phrase, "before the church" means that his example was set before others.

If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well - What does this mean?

a. This means to accompany these missionaries a portion of the way and supply their needs for the journey.

b. This was the custom at that time (compare Romans 15:24).

1:7 Because they went forth for His name's sake - "Name" refers to the name of Christ (compare Acts 5:4; James 2:7; 1 Peter 4:16). The word "name" used in this way represents all that Jesus did and taught as well as His authority.

Taking nothing from the Gentiles - "Taking nothing" refers to receiving no financial support.

If they had accepted money from those they were trying to convert, they could have been accused of preaching for personal gain rather than for the truth.

1:8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth - Just as those who welcomed and supported false teachers shared in their wrongdoing (2 John 1:9), so those who receive and help true teachers share in their work for the truth. The difference lies in whom they were supporting.

III. JOHN'S APOSTOLIC APPROVAL..... 9

1:9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes...does not receive us - John wrote to this congregation, but Diotrephes suppressed the letter and may have even destroyed it. Diotrephes is somewhat of an obscure figure, but the short description we have here provides us with a clear picture of his role and behavior in the early church.

From the text, several key background details can be assumed:

a. He held a position of influence in the local church. He is described as someone who "loves to have the preeminence," suggesting he was likely a significant leader in the congregation.

b. He opposed the apostle John's authority. John said, he "does not receive us," meaning he rejected John's delegated messengers or instructions.

c. He rejected traveling Christian workers (verse 10). He refused to welcome visiting brethren and even prevented others from doing so. This was significant in the early church, where missionaries depended on hospitality.

d. He disciplined or expelled those who disagreed with him (verse 10). The text says he "puts out of the church" those who opposed him,

suggesting he exercised strong—possibly abusive—control over church membership.

Who loves to have the preeminence among them - Literally in the Greek this is, “a lover of the first place.”

a. This attitude must not have a place in the Lord’s church.

b. Diotrephes refused to follow John’s instructions in the letter.

c. In rejecting the letter, he rejected John.

d. Of course, this also means he rejected Christ and God the Father as well!

IV. DOMINATION OF DIOTREPHES..... 10

1:10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church - John recognized that he needed to help these brethren deal with this troublemaker. The conduct of Diotrephes showed his abusive control in several ways:

a. He was “prating against us”—that is, he was spreading idle, malicious, and false accusations.

b. He refused to welcome visiting missionaries.

c. He prevented others from receiving them as well.

d. He expelled those who would not submit to his authority.

Note: Although he could apparently exclude people from the local fellowship, he did not have the power to separate them from Christ.

V. FAITHFULNESS OF DEMETRIUS..... 11-12

1:11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good - The verb “imitate” is a present active imperative, meaning “continue to imitate what is good.” Diotrephes serves as an example of behavior to avoid (verses 9-10), while Demetrius (verses 11-12) provides an example that John’s friend Gaius can follow.

[For additional information concerning doing good, please see the appendices - CAN ANYONE ACTUALLY DO GOOD? by Eric Lyons.]

He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God - The sources of good and evil are also identified:

a. "He who does good is of God" - God is the source of all good (James 1:17).

b. "He who does evil has not seen God" - Satan is the father of all lies and the influencer of evil and rebellion against God (John 8:44; Ephesians 2:2).

1:12 Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself - Demetrius had a good reputation of faithfulness to all those who knew him. The phrase "from the truth itself" means that his life conformed to the teachings of the word.

a. As one who breaks the law is condemned by it, the one who keeps the law is approved by it.

b. In this way truth becomes an independent witness of the faithfulness of those who walk in harmony with it.

And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true - This is John adding his own testimony concerning the faithfulness of Demetrius.

VI. CONCLUSION..... 13-14

1:13 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink - Often, there are things that are better discussed in person.

1:14 But I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face - This explains why John chose not to write more at that time; he intended to address the remaining matters in person.

Peace to you - This is a simple, customary closing to a letter expressing goodwill and blessing.

Our friends greet you - This indicates that others who knew and shared fellowship with Gaius also were sending their greetings to him.

Greet the friends by name - Here is a personal and warm closing, encouraging individual recognition and care. The phrase, "by name" is an expression that reflects how meaningful it is to be greeted personally and specifically.

SPECIAL LESSONS FROM THIS LETTER

A. The apostle John has shown us how to deal with error God's way.

1. When he learned about Diotrephes, he immediately did something about the situation.

2. His message was clear, pointed and forceful.

3. Sins, such as those of Diotrephes, must not to be tolerated.

B. This letter also shows that the idea that we must speak personally with a false teacher (who has taught his views publicly) before responding to him and his teachings is mistaken.

END

APPENDIX

Can Anyone Actually Do Good? .....

Can Anyone Actually Do Good?
By: Eric Lyons

Most people will read the title of this article and immediately think, “Of course a person can do good.” After all, Jesus said, “A good (*agathos*) man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things” (Matthew 12:35). Paul instructed Christians to (simply) “do good to all” (Galatians 6:10). He later reminded the disciples in Corinth that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or evil” (2 Corinthians 5:10). And John wrote: “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God” (3 John 11).

So why such an elementary question? This question is occasionally asked by skeptics who want to know why the Bible repeatedly teaches that God’s people are to “do good,” if, as other biblical passages teach, “there is none who does good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:3; 53:3; Romans 3:12; cf. Mark 10:18). “For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin” (Ecclesiastes 7:20; cf. Isaiah 64:6). Thus, Bible critics ask, “How can the Bible teach that Christians are to do good, if no one can actually be good?”

The question is a fair question. Admittedly, the Bible’s different uses of the term “good” may be confusing to some initially. As with the solution to so many alleged Bible contradictions, however, the answer actually is very simple: words are used in different senses. The term “good” can be used in different ways and in varying degrees. We can talk of a good pizza, a good day, a good dog, a good boy, and our good God, and mean somewhat (or perhaps very) different things.

In the purest and highest meaning of the word, only God is “good.” Jesus referred to this supreme goodness when He said to the rich young ruler, “No one is good but One, that is, God” (Mark 10:18). In truth, as Caleb Colley concluded in his article “**Why is Good Good?**,” “God is good, but not in virtue of a standard of goodness that exists separate from Him.… Good is defined by God’s goodness, which is inseparable from His nature” (2010).

On the other hand, human beings can only know goodness and be good on a dependent and finite level. In the beginning, everything God made, including the first human beings, “was very good” (Genesis 1:31)—but not “good” in precisely the same way our perfectly good God is good. God is innately good. He **cannot** do evil (cf. Titus 1:2); He cannot even be tempted by evil (James 1:13). But a man **can** be tempted to sin, and he **can choose** to sin (James 1:14-15). In fact, every person of an accountable mind and age who has ever lived (save God Incarnate, the Lord Jesus) has chosen to do that which is **not** good (Romans 3:23). Such a decision on man’s part, even one such decision, makes him “no good” in the sense that, apart from God’s amazingly good, saving grace, he is a lawfully condemned, unholy sinner (Romans 3:24). What’s more, on our own,

apart from God, we can do absolutely nothing about our sinfulness. There is nothing that we could do on our own to become "good."

Sinful man can only become good and just by choosing to accept God's perfectly good and gracious gift of salvation through Christ (Romans 5:8,15-21; see **Lyons and Butt**, 2004). Subsequently, God-saved, newly made good people (i.e., Christians) will "put to death" their rebelliously sinful selves (repenting of sins—Acts 2:38; 3:19) and "put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3:5,10; cf. Romans 12:1-2).

Indeed, Christians can be good and do good. We are not good in and of ourselves. Rather, by the grace of our innately and supremely good God, we can be justified and "become followers of what is good" (1 Peter 3:13). We can walk in the light of God, knowing that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). And, during moments of weakness, when we choose that which is not good, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Thus, our good God even provided a way for Christians to remain "good" and to continue doing good works, in spite of our imperfections and struggles with sin.

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JUDE
INTRODUCTION

I. Authorship

A. I want to make it clear that God is the author of this book, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

B. The writer whom God used to reveal this epistle was Jude the brother of James - this is how the writer of the epistle identifies himself.

1. This means that he is also a half-brother of Jesus and was the youngest or next to youngest (compare Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).

2. Following the example of James, he simply refers to himself as a "bondservant of Jesus Christ" (James 1:1).

3. Notice that he claims no special privilege because of his physical relationship to Jesus.

a. However, Christians would have treated the Lord's brother in the flesh with great respect.

b. Therefore, it is not surprising that this inspired epistle was accepted widely by the church.

II. Destination

A. This letter was possibly written from Jerusalem or Palestine and some feel it was sent first to Antioch.

B. Tradition is that Jude became an elder of the church in Jerusalem, but currently there is no evidence to support this theory.

III. Date

A. The epistle was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, approximately 64-68 A.D.

IV. Occasion and Purpose

A. Jude was compelled, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to change his original plan of writing about salvation and instead urgently

warn his readers about a coming danger: false teachers who needed to be rebuked.

B. There appear to be two major problems that Jude is addressing, both of which were influenced by false teachings associated with Gnostic thought and related movements.

1. The problem of Antinomianism (“against law”) - Certain false teachers, influenced by early Gnostic ideas, believed they had advanced to such a high level of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment that they were beyond judgment or condemnation for their sinful actions.

    a. They taught that the physical body was inherently evil or insignificant, while the spirit alone truly mattered.

    b. As a result, they claimed that immoral behavior committed in the body did not affect a person’s spiritual standing before God.

    c. This belief led to moral looseness and licentious living, as they felt free to indulge sinful desires without fear of divine accountability.

    d. Jude strongly rebukes this distortion of grace, warning that God’s grace must never be used as a license for immorality (compare Jude 1:4).

2. The problem associated with the Ebionites - Another error circulating during the early church period was connected to the Ebionites, an extreme legalistic Jewish-Christian sect that stood at the opposite end of the spectrum from Gnostic antinomianism.

    a. While the Gnostics minimized moral law and often denied Christ’s true humanity, the Ebionites emphasized strict adherence to Jewish law and denied the full deity of Jesus Christ.

    b. They accepted Jesus as a human prophet or specially chosen messenger but rejected His divine nature and eternal preexistence.

c. By denying Christ's deity while affirming only His humanity, they undermined the true identity of Christ as both fully God and fully man.

VI. Theme

A. The theme of the epistle is the danger of false teachers and the necessity of contending for the faith.

B. In this way, the epistle resembles Second Peter.

1. Some mistakenly claim that Peter copied Jude, while others argue that Jude copied Peter. However, this overlooks the fact that both writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit, who revealed to them what to write.

2. Also, Second Peter warns of false teachers who are yet to come (2 Peter 2:1), while Jude speaks of them as already present (Jude 1:4).

3. Jude's reference to apostolic warnings about false teachers may be a reference to Peter's second epistle (Jude 1:17-18).

B. The important thing to remember is that both writers were guided by the Holy Spirit, and which one wrote first is of little importance.

VII. Authenticity

A. Jude's letter has been questioned by some regarding its authenticity. They say that since Jude quoted some uninspired writings in a few instances, then all of his writings must be uninspired.

B. They point to two places where they say Jude used uninspired literature.

1. These were certain Jewish writings that never met the standard of Scripture. They were never accepted by either Jews or Christians as inspired.

2. These writings falsely claimed to have come from Moses and Enoch to give them an appearance of authenticity.

C. The claim is that Jude refers to material from the "Assumption of Moses" (Jude 1:9) and the "Book of Enoch" (Jude 1:14-15).

D. However, Jude's letter cannot be called into question on this basis. If Jude did mention material from these writings it should be remembered that God's word does not prohibit the occasional reference to uninspired sources.

1. Paul cites the Greek poets:

a. Aratus (Acts 17:28),

b. Menander (1 Corinthians 15:33) and

c. Epimenides (Titus 1:12).

2. No one believes that Paul was endorsing everything these men ever wrote or taught.

3. Quoting part of a work does not imply approval of the entire work.

E. If Jude made use of certain uninspired sources, then the Holy Spirit enabled him to do so in a way that accurately conveyed the truth.

VIII. The Epistle's Value

A. As long as sinful practices require stern rebuke, this epistle will remain relevant.

B. When this book is ignored, it reveals more about a lack of spiritual maturity than about any weakness in the epistle itself.

IX. Key Verse

A. Jude 1:3, "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

JUDE
OUTLINE

I. Introduction 1-4

II. Warnings 5-19

III. Exhortations 20-25

JUDE EXPOSITION

I. INTRODUCTION 1-4

1:1 Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ - The name "Jude" (or "Judah/Judas" in some translations) was very common among first-century Jews.

> In the New Testament, at least nine different individuals are identified by this name. These include people mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus, several of Jesus' disciples, the brother of Jesus, and other men referred to in the book of Acts. Relevant references include Matthew 10:3–4; 13:55; Luke 3:26, 3:30, 3:33; and Acts 5:37; 9:11; 15:22.

The word "bondservant" comes from the Greek word DOULOS, which literally means "slave." However, the term carries a deeper meaning than ordinary slavery. A DOULOS is someone who willingly and gladly submits his will to the master. While literal slaves did not always serve willingly, all faithful followers of the Lord voluntarily surrender their lives and wills to Him with willing hearts.

Although the writer was a brother of the Lord, he does not mention this relationship in the epistle. Instead, he humbly identifies himself simply as a "bondservant" of Jesus Christ.

There are several possible reasons why Jude chose to describe himself simply as a bondservant of Jesus Christ rather than mentioning that he was the Lord's brother:

a. Jude wanted readers to accept his message because it was the inspired word of God, not merely because of his family relationship to Jesus.

b. His humility likely kept him from emphasizing his earthly relationship to the Lord.

c. Mentioning such a relationship might have caused envy or jealousy among others.

d. Jesus Himself taught that spiritual obedience to God is more important than physical family ties (Matthew 12:46-50).

And brother of James - The writer of this epistle identifies himself as the brother of James, probably because James was widely known in the Jerusalem church and was recognized as the author of the Epistle of James. As noted in the comments on James 1:1, neither Jude nor James was counted among the twelve apostles.

To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ - Jude addresses this letter to those who are "sanctified," meaning Christians, those who have been called out of the world and set apart for God (compare 1 Peter 2:9-10). How were they called? Through the gospel, the word of God.

> 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Sanctified" - Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit, as the agent, uses the word of God as His instrument to bring a person into the likeness of Jesus Christ in word, thought, and deed. "Preserved" means "to keep safe, to guard, or to watch over." This word expresses the watchful care given by God.

1:2 Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you - Notice that Jude does not simply pray that mercy, peace, and love would be increased, but that these qualities would be **multiplied**. He desired that these qualities would abound richly in the lives of his readers.

> Mercy, peace, and love are mentioned together because they summarize the spiritual blessings most needed by Jude's readers—and by Christians today. These blessings come from God, and Jude's desire was that they would continue to grow abundantly among the believers.

1:3 Beloved - The word "beloved" at the beginning of the verse reveals the writer's deep love and care for those to whom he was writing. The apostles often used this term in their letters to express Christian love and close fellowship among believers (see Romans 1:7; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 2:12; etc.). Jude himself uses the word "beloved" three times (Jude 1:3, 17, 20).

> All the faithful in Christ Jesus are beloved by God and beloved by one another.

While I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation - The word "diligent" comes from the Greek word (SPOUDĒ) meaning, "haste, speed, effort, earnestness, strong desire, determination."

The use of the word "common" to describe salvation does **not** mean "ordinary." Rather, it refers to the fact that salvation in Christ is available to all people

everywhere who are willing to comply with the terms set forth by Jesus (compare Mark 16:16; Acts 10:34–35; 2 Peter 3:9; Hebrews 5:9; Titus 1:4).

I found it necessary - Under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, Jude understood the urgency of the matter and wrote because it was God's will for him to do so, not because of his own personal choice or timing.

> Jude felt compelled, under the Holy Spirit's direction, to change his original plan and instead urgently warn his readers about a coming danger. Their faith was at risk of being distorted and corrupted. At the same time, false teachers were attacking the truth concerning the divinity and person of Christ.
>
> > These Christians needed to understand that before they could effectively stand against such opposition, they must first be firmly grounded in their own beliefs and understanding. The only real foundation and protection against these attacks is the truth of God's word.

To write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith - The word "exhorting" comes from the Greek word PARAKALEŌ. It means to strongly encourage, urge, or appeal to someone. It was sometimes used in a military sense to describe a leader encouraging fearful soldiers to move forward into battle (see Acts 2:40; Romans 12:8; Hebrews 10:25).

The phrase "to contend earnestly" means to put forth strong effort, to struggle, and to work hard for something. It was originally used in connection with athletic competitions, describing the intense effort athletes make as they compete for victory. It is also a strong word drawn from boxing or fighting contests.

> Our English word "agonize" comes from part of this Greek word, showing how intense and serious the struggle is. In this context, it means to strongly and actively defend the faith.
>
> > When the enemy attacks, the Christian must take a firm stand on the specific truth, teaching or belief that is being challenged. He does not retreat, but instead works hard and remains faithful to defend what is right. He earnestly holds on to the truth and protects it from being changed or destroyed (compare Colossians 1:29; 2 Timothy 4:7; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Peter 2:1-2).

Notice the definite article in the phrase "the faith." They are not simply contending for "a faith," or for "some faith," or even just "any faith," but for "the faith"—the only true faith (compare Galatians 1:6-9, 23; 3:23, 25-26; Acts 6:6).

"The faith" is something that:

1. Was given by God to mankind,

2. Was delivered once for all time and is complete, with no additions or changes needed or allowed,

3. Has been entrusted to God's people, and

4. Must be carefully defended and protected.

Which was once for all delivered to the saints - The Greek word for "once" here (HAPAX) is literally - "once for all time."

There are no allowed changes or additions to "the faith." It was given "once for all time," meaning it was fully revealed once and does not need to be improved or revised (see also Hebrews 9:26, 28; 10:2; 1 Peter 3:18, 20; Revelation 22:18-19).

This faith is something that has been "delivered" to God's people. It did not come from human ideas, councils, or religious meetings. Instead, it came from the mind of God and was given to mankind. God the Father revealed His plan through the Holy Spirit to men like Peter, Paul and others, and they recorded and spoke it by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 3:1-5; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21).

This same truth is also emphasized in Galatians 1:6–9; Revelation 22:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; and Proverbs 30:6.

"The saints" are New Testament Christians—God's people. They are, therefore, the custodians of "the faith." They have the sacred, solemn, and even sobering responsibility of teaching, preaching, proclaiming, living, and earnestly contending for the faith.

If "the saints" do not earnestly contend for "the faith," then it will not be contended for, and people will lose the opportunity to know the difference between truth and error, between right and wrong, and between the doctrine of God and the doctrines of men. God's people must speak boldly as they ought to speak (Ephesians 6:18-20).

1:4 For certain men - Both Paul and Peter had previously warned that such men would come (compare Acts 20:29-30; 2 Peter 2:1-2). Now, when Jude writes, he

shows that this warning has been fulfilled—these ungodly false teachers have come and are already present in the world.

> Jude is not speaking about a future possibility, but stating a present reality: these false teachers are already among the Christians and actively at work.

Have crept in unnoticed - The Greek word here for the phrase “crept in unnoticed” literally means that these men “slipped in alongside secretly.” They were intentionally trying to destroy the faith. They did not reveal their true intentions but entered under false pretenses. It is as if they took advantage of an unguarded place.

> The idea is similar to false teachers sneaking in through a side door in order to spread their evil teaching.
>
> In the Greek, this is a very expressive word. Some of its uses include:
>
> 1. The clever and persuasive words of an attorney gradually influencing the minds of a judge and jury.
>
> 2. An outlaw secretly slipping back into a country from which he had been expelled.
>
> 3. The slow and subtle introduction of new practices into a nation that eventually undermines its established laws.
>
> 4. In every case, it describes a stealthy and harmful intrusion into a society or situation.

Who long ago were marked out for this condemnation - “Marked out” means, “to write beforehand, to write down previously, predetermined.”

> The idea here is that it has been “written beforehand in God’s book of judgment.” It shows that the enemies of God are already doomed.
>
> > This is not teaching the Calvinistic false doctrine of the “predestination” of individual souls, but rather refers to the class or type of men who are condemned. God has already determined the judgment that will come upon this kind of ungodly people.

Ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness - The Greek word for “turn” (METATITHĒMI) means “to transpose,” “to change from one place to another,” or “to transfer.” It is in the present tense, which indicates a continuous action—showing that they were continually trying to change things.

“Lewdness” refers to a way of life that is morally unrestrained and sexually immoral. It describes behavior that shows no regard for self-control, decency, or God’s standards of purity. It includes licentiousness, indecent conduct, and shameful actions that openly disregard moral boundaries.

> In short, it points to all forms of sinful sensual behavior and public indecency that come from a lack of restraint and a rejection of godly living.

and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ - To “deny” means to reject or refuse God the Father and Jesus the Christ. The wording is very strong and emphatic, showing a complete refusal of God’s authority.

> This denial can happen in several ways. A person may foolishly deny Christ:
>
> 1. During times of persecution, when fear or pressure leads them to reject Him.
>
> 2. For the sake of convenience, when it seems easier to go along with others than to remain faithful.
>
> 3. Through their conduct and way of life, even if they claim to believe in Him, by living in a way that contradicts His teachings.
>
> 4. By adopting or spreading false ideas about who He is, thereby distorting the truth about Him.

The Gnostics taught and defended the idea that because Christians are under grace, they are no longer under law. From this they wrongly concluded that Christians were free to do whatever they pleased, including engaging in all forms of immoral and sensual behavior. These individuals are known as antinomians—those who reject or disregard moral law.

> Even today, some continue to promote the same false teaching—that Christians are not under law in any sense.
>
> Theologian Richard C. H. Lenski (1864-1936), noted that these men “deny, disown, and repudiate even Christ Himself.” They rejected His authority, refused His lordship, and denied Him as Savior and Messiah. In effect, this was a complete rejection of Christ.

There are many religious people today who fall into the same trap as the Gnostics because they misunderstand God's grace.

II. WARNINGS 5-19

To understand the examples Jude uses in this section, we need to recognize that the evil men who were corrupting the church did not see themselves as enemies of Christianity. Instead, they considered themselves advanced thinkers—spiritually superior to ordinary Christians, a kind of "spiritual elite."

Jude uses the following examples to show that even those with special privileges can still fall from grace. No one who has received great blessings from God should consider himself beyond danger. Instead, all must remain constantly watchful, making sure they do not misunderstand or misuse Scripture.

1:5 <u>But I want to remind you, though you once knew this</u> - People are often like children in that they are quick to forget important things. For this reason, we must be constantly reminded of "the faith once delivered."

> Jude is not introducing any new teaching here. Instead, he is giving a serious reminder based on truths his readers already knew and had previously been taught.

<u>that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe</u> - This example is used to show that, in much the same way, the false teachers in Jude's day had once been saved but later turned away and were lost. This demonstrates that it is not enough simply to begin serving the Lord; faithfulness must continue throughout one's life.

> In other words, starting well is not sufficient on its own. A person must remain faithful and obedient to God, because failure to continue in the faith results in condemnation.

1:6 <u>And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode</u> - The phrase "proper domain" or "first estate" refers to a position of authority, rank, or assigned place. It can describe the office or sphere of responsibility given to the angels when they were created, or the realm in which they were meant to operate under God's order.

> It may also refer to their original spiritual condition—meaning the state in which they were created as holy beings. Instead of remaining in that

original place and condition, they abandoned it and “left their own abode” (habitation).

He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day - The “great day” referred to here is the final judgment described in Matthew 25:41. On that day, the wicked angels will receive their punishment along with evil people. They are already being kept in bondage under darkness, awaiting that final judgment.

The writer’s point is this: if even angels who sinned did not escape God’s judgment, then neither will the false teachers mentioned in verse 4 avoid His punishment.

1:7 As Sodom and Gomorrah - The third example Jude gives of God’s judgment on the wicked is the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, along with the surrounding towns. These cities were known for the extremely sinful and immoral behavior of their people. The full account of their sin and the severe judgment that came upon them is recorded in detail in Genesis 19.

And the cities around them in a similar manner to these - The other cities that were destroyed were Admah and Zeboim. A fifth city, Zoar, was spared because that is where Lot first went (compare Deuteronomy 29:23).

having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh - The Greek word for “strange” (HETEROS) means “another of a different kind.” It refers to something that is different from what is proper, natural, or intended by God.

In this context, Jude is referring to homosexuality and lesbianism. However, there are several sexual behaviors that are contrary to God’s design, not according to the natural sexual relationship between husband and wife. This would include:

1. Adultery - sexual relations involving someone who is married to another person (Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:27-28).

2. Fornication / sexual immorality - a broad category to include sexual activity outside marriage (1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

3. Incest - sexual relations between close relatives (Leviticus 18:6-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1).

4. Same sex relations - Homosexuality and Lesbianism (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

5. Prostitution and exploitation through sex (Proverbs 23:27–28; 1 Corinthians 6:15-16).

6. Sexual acts with animals (Leviticus 18:23; Deuteronomy 27:21).

Are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire - These examples are given so that we can learn from them and take them seriously. They are meant to be repeated and kept in mind as warnings throughout Scripture.

> The phrase “eternal fire” does not simply refer to something that is temporary or limited to this life. It points to a lasting, ongoing judgment that is not the same as complete destruction or annihilation (ceasing to exist).
>
> At the same time, punishment implies awareness. A person cannot experience or feel punishment unless he is conscious. For that reason, the idea of annihilation (total extinction without awareness) does not fit the concept of the punishment being described here.

1:8 Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh - These “dreamers” refers to the false teachers (verse 4). “Likewise,” means just like Sodom and Gomorrah.

“Dreamers” describes people who are so deceived and spiritually blind that they mistake what is real for what is false, and what is false for what is real. This highlights that their claimed “revelations” were not from God but from their own imagination.

> “Dreamers” could also mean that they are spiritually “asleep” to God’s coming judgment. They are caught up in temporary, deceptive pleasures and fantasies of sinful desires, and they fail to see the true reality of their condition.

They not only “defile” themselves but also those who listen to and follow them.

Reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries - They showed disrespect for all authority, whether human or divine, and they were not afraid to speak evil of others, even when those people held positions of honor or responsibility (see 2 Peter 2:10).

It is much the same way today, often submission to authority is set aside. People choose to “do their own thing” and “look out for number one.”

1:9 Yet Michael the archangel - Michael is first mentioned in Scripture in Daniel 10:13, with other references in Daniel 10:21 and 12:1, as well as Revelation 12:7. He is described as “the archangel,” a term meaning a chief or leading angel. In Revelation 12:7-9, he appears as the leader of the holy angels who fought against Satan and his rebellious angels, defeating them.

However, Scripture does not give many additional details about this conflict, so it is unwise to go beyond what is written or to speculate about it.

The mention of Michael is given as a contrast to these false teachers, illustrating the same principle found in 2 Peter 2:10-11 (see comments in the 2 Peter Course Notes).

In contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ - All we know about this dispute comes from the brief statement given here. We are told in Deuteronomy 34:6 that no **man** knew the burial place of Moses. However, this does not necessarily mean that Satan and the angels were also unaware of it.

Some have suggested that the “body of Moses” could symbolize the nation of Israel rather than the literal body of Moses. But since Scripture does not clearly explain the details of this dispute, we should avoid speculation that shifts our attention away from the main lesson.

The important point is the contrast shown in Michael’s behavior. He acted with restraint and respect, which stands in sharp contrast to the arrogance and disrespect shown by the false teachers.

1:10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know - Their singular focus was on the sensual and physical things of this life; therefore, they blasphemed everything that was spiritual and holy.

The Gnostics believed they were free to speak against anything they chose, regardless of their understanding of God’s truth. They claimed to possess special knowledge that God had not revealed in Scripture.

They also believed that their rituals gave them access to truth that even the inspired writers of the Old and New Testaments did not have. Because of this attitude, these false teachers felt entitled to add to Scripture or take away from it (compare Revelation 22:18-19).

And whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves - The only things they understand "naturally" are the kinds of things animals also understand. Their lives were driven by physical desires. Like wild animals, they simply followed whatever felt good to them. They lived to satisfy their lusts.

Jude says two things about these evil people:

1. They criticize things they do not understand.

2. They allow themselves to be controlled and corrupted by the things they do understand.

1:11 Woe to them - The noun is not expressed in the phrase "woe unto them," and the grammar can be understood in two ways. It may be taken as:

a. a curse, meaning "may woe be upon them," or

b. a statement of fact, meaning "woe is coming upon them."

From the context it seems to be used in the second sense here—a simple statement that great misery will certainly come upon them. This is how the word "woe" is also used in Matthew 24:19.

Jude now gives three examples to show that rebellion and disobedience lead to destruction:

a. For they have gone in the way of Cain - Cain chose his own way of worship instead of obeying God. His lack of love (anger) led him to commit murder (see Genesis 4). This shows that self-willed religion and hatred lead to sin and ruin.

b. (They) have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit - Balaam was motivated by greed and was willing to do wrong for personal gain. He tried to curse Israel for money (see Numbers 22-24). In the same way, these false teachers were willing to teach error in order to profit financially, treating sin as something acceptable.

c. And perished in the rebellion of Korah - Korah rebelled against God's appointed authority of Moses and Aaron (see Numbers 16). Likewise, these men refused to submit to spiritual authority and resisted divinely appointed leadership (the apostles), just as Korah did.

Together, these examples show that pride, greed, and rebellion against God always end in disaster.

> There may be a progression in these examples: first going the way of Cain, then running into the error of Balaam, and finally perishing in the rebellion of Korah. This illustrates how sin can develop step by step.
>
> > At first, a person merely walks toward sin. Then he begins to run after it, becoming more deeply involved. In the end, he is completely destroyed by it. The same pattern is seen in the desires of the flesh. It may begin with a small, careless step toward wrongdoing, then grow into a strong pursuit of sin, and finally end in total spiritual ruin.
> >
> > Sin is like a trap that tightens with every act of indulgence. It is not just one sudden fall, but a series of steps, each one drawing a person deeper and becoming more dangerous than the last. It often begins with what seems like harmless rebellion, but it ends in complete destruction. “Woe to them!”

1:12 <u>These are spots in your love feasts</u> - The Greek word for “spots” (SPILAS) refers to a hidden rock or reef in the sea. It remains unseen until it causes damage or leads to shipwreck.

“Feasts” refers to feasts of charity (see 2 Peter 2:13). These were common meals shared by Christians during the 1st century. Christians gathered together for fellowship, encouragement, charity, and care for one another.

These meals likely began as a way for wealthier Christians to provide food for poorer members of the congregation and to eat with them as an expression of Christian love and brotherhood. Jude’s reference here, along with a similar statement in 2 Peter 2:13, shows that Christians commonly gathered together for shared meals and fellowship.

> These meals were not the same as the Lord’s Supper and should not be confused with it. In fact, when some people in Corinth turned the Lord’s Supper into an ordinary common meal, Paul strongly rebuked them for it (see 1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

<u>While they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves</u> - Instead of fearing and submitting to (serving) the true shepherds of the flock—the elders of the church—these false teachers tried to present themselves as spiritual leaders. However, their real concern was not caring for the flock, but satisfying and benefiting themselves.

This idea is similar to the rebuke found in Ezekiel and Isaiah.

> Ezekiel 34:2: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?”’”
>
> Isaiah 56:11, “Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand; They all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his own territory.”

These verses describe selfish leaders as greedy men who seek their own gain instead of caring for God’s people.

<u>They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds</u> - These false teachers were like clouds that promise rain but produce none. In dry lands such as Palestine, farmers watched the clouds with hope, expecting refreshing rain for their crops. But when the clouds were blown away by the wind without giving any rain, hope turned into disappointment.

> In the same way, these false teachers made great promises and appeared impressive, but they brought no real spiritual help or blessing. Instead, they left people empty and disappointed (compare Proverbs 25:14).

<u>late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots</u> - These false teachers were like trees in late autumn that should have been full of fruit but had none. At the very time when fruit was expected, they were barren and unproductive.

> Jude may have been reminding his readers of the parable of the barren fig tree, which also teaches the lesson of failed expectations (Luke 13:6-9). But Jude goes even further. These trees were not only fruitless—they were “twice dead” and uprooted. That means there was no hope of any future fruit from them.
>
> > This was Jude’s description of the false teachers: spiritually dead, useless, and unable to produce anything good.
> >
> > “Pulled up by the roots” is a phrase describing fruitless trees that are uprooted in order to be burned. This was a familiar Old Testament picture of judgment (compare Psalm 52:5; Jeremiah 1:10; 12:17; and Malachi 4:1).

1:13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame - Isaiah uses the image of foaming sea waves to describe wicked people.

> Isaiah 57:20-21, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ‘There is no peace,’ Says my God, ‘for the wicked.’”

The picture is of waves washing trash and debris onto the shore. In the same way, these men, with their “great swelling words of emptiness” (2 Peter 2:18), were like crashing waves that make a lot of noise but leave behind only tangled and worthless debris.

Wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever - These are stars that disappear into outer darkness. Just as shooting stars which disappear out of the sky and are engulfed in the darkness of space (compare Matthew 25:30).

> The false teachers are like wandering stars with no fixed path or orbit, they shine for a time and then disappear into complete darkness. For them, the deepest darkness has been reserved forever. There is a strong similarity between this passage and 2 Peter 2:1-22.

1:14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also - More information can be found about Enoch in Genesis 5:21-24 and Hebrews 11:5.

> Enoch’s prophecy in Jude 1:14-15 was directed toward people like the false teachers Jude was warning about. Jude was not claiming that Enoch specifically predicted these exact people centuries in advance. Rather, he meant that the judgment Enoch proclaimed against ungodly and rebellious people in his own time applied equally to the false teachers of Jude’s day.

Before leaving the subject of Enoch as a true prophet of God, it helps to remember what Scripture says about him. Enoch “walked with God,” meaning he lived in very close fellowship with Him. God also took Enoch from the earth without his experiencing death. In addition, Enoch named his son Methuselah, a name many believe means, “when he dies, the flood will come.” If this is correct, then even Methuselah’s name was a prophecy of coming judgment.

Because of these things, it is reasonable and right to accept Jude’s inspired statement that God used Enoch to speak a prophecy against wicked people. Enoch’s life and even the naming of his son suggest that God revealed future events to him.

It is also important to note that although this prophecy is similar to one found in the non-inspired writing called 1 Enoch, this does not mean that Jude was quoting from that uninspired work. It is more reasonable to assume that Jude received the information concerning Enoch's prophecy through divine inspiration.

1 Enoch is not accepted as an inspired book of the Bible by most Jewish and Christian scholars. It is considered a pseudepigraphal work, meaning it was written under a false name and was not actually written by the Enoch mentioned in the book of Genesis.

The word "PSEUDEPIGRAPHA" comes from Greek and combines two words: PSEUDĒS, meaning "false" or "untrue," and EPIGRAPHĒ, meaning "inscription," "title," or "superscription."

Saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints" - This phrase refers to angels who will accompany the Lord when He comes to judge the world. The same idea appears in the book of Matthew, where it says: "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory" (Matthew 25:31). Similar descriptions are also found in Deuteronomy 33:2-3 and Zechariah 14:5.

1:15 To execute judgment on all - At the end of time, the Lord's return is not for the purpose of offering grace, but of carrying out judgment. The grace needed for salvation has already been fully provided through His sacrifice on the cross. Therefore, those who have accepted that grace and obeyed God's plan of salvation will be saved, but those who have rejected it will face the consequences of judgment.

In the Scriptures we find that God's plan for salvation has five steps:

1. The first step is to hear the saving message of salvation (Romans 10:17). In other words, one must learn of the truth before they can obey it.

2. The second step is to have faith, or believe that Jesus is indeed the Christ the Son of God (John 8:24; Mark 16:15-16). However, this is not the only step. Faith alone will not save (James 2:14, 17, 24).

3. The third step of God's plan is repentance. The sinner is required to repent which is composed of sorrow for sin, a change of will, which results in a changed life (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 7:10).

4. The fourth step is confession. The sinner is required to confess their faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:10).

5. The fifth step is baptism (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-19; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21).

A person's sins are washed away not by the **water** of baptism, but by the **blood** of Christ when one submits to God's plan of salvation: hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized (Acts 8:38–39). Only then is the sinner saved from past sins and added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:38, 41).

> We do not earn our salvation, and there are no works of merit that can save us (Ephesians 2:9). However, there are works of obedience that God requires (Ephesians 2:10; James 2:19–20).

The Bible also teaches that once a person hears, believes, repents, confesses, and is baptized to become a child of God, he must remain faithful to the Lord in order to have an eternal home with Him in heaven. Those who fall away from the Lord and do not return in repentance, seeking forgiveness through prayer, will lose their souls (2 Peter 2:20–22; James 5:19–20; Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9).

To convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him - In the Greek text, the words "ungodly sinners" are placed at the end of the sentence for emphasis. This highlights the main point the writer wants to make. The Lord is coming to judge everyone, to expose the ungodly for their evil actions, and to hold them accountable for the harsh and wicked things they have said against Him—these ungodly sinners.

1:16 These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts - Jude now gives additional details about these false teachers.

> Nothing that happens seems to satisfy them. They are never content with what they have, always longing for something different. In winter they wish it were summer, and in summer they wish it were winter. They behave like children who are never pleased, constantly complaining about their circumstances and finding fault with their present situation.

Walking according to their own lusts - This was not a sudden mistake or accidental failure, but a settled pattern of evil that they had chosen and continued to follow.

> They had set their own course in life toward wrongdoing, and they remained firmly on that path. Because they were focused only on themselves and showed no concern for the well-being of others, they lived without compassion or responsibility. As a result, their actions brought judgment upon them, and they stood condemned because of the life they had deliberately chosen to pursue.

And they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage - They use large, impressive words to influence those who they believe they can fool. They show admiration for people's outward appearance or status, not because of genuine respect, but because they hope to gain personal advantage from them. In other words, they showed "partiality" (compare Acts 10:34) in a self-serving way. Overall, the passage describes individuals who are deeply selfish and primarily concerned with their own benefit.

1:17 But you, beloved - This begins the contrast between the Christians and the actions and punishment of these false teachers previously addressed.

Remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ - Jude urges them to recall what the apostles had already taught. His point is that they should not follow new or misleading ideas, but return to the original message they first received (compare Jeremiah 6:16).

> In other words, he is telling them to go back to the true standard of teaching and stay faithful to it—meaning the well-established and trustworthy way of truth passed down from the inspired apostles.

1:18 How they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts - The word translated "mockers" here is the same word used in 2 Peter 3:3. In both places, the idea is similar. Jude does not go into as much detail as Peter, but he is referring to the same kind of behavior.

> 2 Peter 3:3, "Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts."

The specific form of mockery being described is the sneering attitude of people who ridicule the promise of the Lord's return, especially by claiming that He is delaying and will not come (see 2 Peter 3:1-4).

1:19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit - The word "sensual" means these men were controlled by their desires and lusts, without any self-control.

The “divisions” mentioned do not mean they had physically left the church. They were still among the Christians, but they were harming and taking advantage of them from within. The separation is based on their choices and desires, not their location.

> They chose to pursue sinful and immoral desires instead of living righteously. Because of this, they resisted and rejected the inspired words of the Holy Spirit revealed in the Scriptures. As a result, they were far from the Spirit of Christ. This separated them from those who truly belong to Him. Holiness cannot dwell in a sensual heart.

III. EXHORTATIONS 20-25

1:20 But you, beloved - The word “but” once again signals a contrast.

Building yourselves up on your most holy faith - “Building yourselves up” means strengthening and encouraging themselves spiritually. This happens as they grow through the word of God, which is the foundation of the faith.

> As Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In other words, the Scriptures are what produce and strengthen true faith. So to “build up” oneself is to remain in God’s Word, to learn from it, and to let it shape and deepen one’s trust in God.

Praying in the Holy Spirit - “Praying in the Holy Spirit” means praying in harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures.

> There is a clear pattern for prayer set forth in the Scriptures. We are to pray to God the Father through Jesus Christ, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He said, “When you pray, say: ‘Our Father in heaven’” (Luke 11:1–2). It is clear that our prayers are to be directed to God the Father through Christ, our mediator (John 14:13–14; 15:16; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1; 1 Timothy 2:5). Christians are blessed to have direct access to the Father through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:19; 4:16; John 16:20–23). The Holy Spirit also aids Christians in their prayers offered to the Father in heaven (Romans 8:26–27).

1:21 Keep yourselves in the love of God - This is a command, not a suggestion. It means Christians are to continue living in a way that remains within God’s love—by staying faithful, obedient, and close to Him.

> If it were impossible for someone to turn away from God’s forgiveness, then there would be no need for this instruction. The fact that the Holy

Spirit inspired Jude to write it shows that Christians must actively remain in a right relationship with God.

This idea is similar to what Jesus said in John 15:9-10, where He teaches that those who remain in His love do so by keeping His commandments. It also agrees with 1 Peter 1:5, which speaks of Christians being kept by God's power through faith. Together, these passages show both God's protection and the believer's responsibility to remain faithful.

Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life - "Looking for" means more than simply noticing something—it means eagerly waiting and expecting it. It carries the idea of looking forward with hope and anticipation.

Those who obey God's commandments receive His love and forgiveness, and because of this, they can face the Lord's coming with confidence rather than fear. When He comes to judge the world, they can trust in His mercy and have assurance because they have remained faithful to Him.

1:22 And on some have compassion, making a distinction - Having "compassion" means trying to understand others by putting yourself in their situation. People should be treated according to what they are capable of understanding and how much opportunity they have had to learn right from wrong (compare Galatians 6:1).

The phrase "making a distinction" suggests the need for spiritual discernment in dealing with different people. Not everyone is in the same condition spiritually, nor does everyone respond in the same way.

Some people who are in error are honestly confused or unsure, and they should be treated with great patience and kindness. Others may be confused or unsure about what is true, and they should be gently guided toward the truth rather than treated harshly.

1:23 But others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh - "Others" refers to people who are more deeply trapped in error and sin. The "fear" mentioned is concern for the danger of them losing their souls. "Pulling them out" means to urgently and decisively rescue them, as if snatching them away from danger.

"Hating even the garment defiled by the flesh" is a warning to show strong rejection of sin itself, and to be careful not to become involved in it or influenced by it while trying to help others.

1:24 This verse and verse 25 are closing praises to God.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy - The word “able” refers to the One who has all power and authority—God Himself. It means He is fully capable of doing what no one else can do. This description highlights God’s complete ability to save, sustain, and bring His people to final glory.

The idea of God being “able” is used several times in the New Testament to emphasize His limitless power:

1. In Romans 16:25, God is described as “able to establish” believers, meaning He can establish them firmly in the faith through their obedience to His word.

2. In Ephesians 3:20, He is said to be “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think,” showing that His power goes far beyond human understanding or expectation.

Together, these passages stress that God is not limited—He is fully able to accomplish everything needed for the believer’s salvation and spiritual growth.

1:25 To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen - Jesus is called God because He shares the divine nature, existed always with God, and is Himself God (John 1:1, 14). The honor given to Him—glory, majesty, dominion, and power—covers all time: past, present, and future, extending into all eternity.

In this way, the epistle ends with a strong expression of faith and trust in the Lord. It begins with Jude’s desire for mercy, peace, and love to be multiplied among the Christians (verse 2), and it closes on the same note of confidence in God.

Throughout the inspired letter, Jude has spoken strongly against false teachers who were threatening the church. He clearly rebuked those who were corrupting the faith and leading Christians astray. But in the end, he turns from warning to encouragement, gently placing his readers in the care of God—who protects, defends, and sustains them.

END

APPENDIX

Did Jude Treat Noncanonical Writings as if They Were Inspired?.....

Did Jude Treat Noncanonical Writings as if They Were Inspired?

By: Caleb Colley, Ph.D.

There are sixty-six books commonly accepted as Scripture—the divinely inspired Word of God. Origen (c. 185-254), a prolific early Christian writer, noted a commonly accepted list of 27 New Testament books, indicating that by the second or third century, the New Testament canon was established (McGarvey, 1974, 1:66). There are many other books, beside the New Testament canon, that are considered inspired by some scholars, but not all (**A.P. Staff**, 2003, p. 1). The Bible is complete as it is, sufficient for the spiritual needs of Christians (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Luke 21:33; John 12:48).

Critics of the Bible would like nothing better than to show that God's Word is a tangled web of contradictions, inconsistencies, and untruths. To that end, many critics have attempted to chip away at the credibility of Scripture by showing that it simply is impossible to determine what material is Scripture and what material is not. They have alleged that the biblical writers themselves accepted extrabiblical sources as inspired Scripture. One instance of a biblical writer allegedly treating noncanonical material as authoritative is in Jude 9. "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'"

Aside from Jude 9, there is no biblical record of any "contention" or meeting between the devil and Michael the archangel. Many scholars, based on the writings of Clement, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origin, and Didymus (Guthrie, 1962, p. 918; Earle, Blaney, and Hanson, 1955, p. 411), assume that Jude 9 is a reference to an apocryphal book called *The Assumption of Moses*, a work that is extant only in fragmental form (in Latin and in a translation from Greek). The fragment now known as *The Assumption of Moses* presents the account of Moses' appointing of Joshua as his successor, and a description of the future of Israel during the conquest of the Promised Land. According to Richard Lenksi, scholars believe that the missing portion of *The Assumption* included "an elaboration" of Deuteronomy 34:5, the biblical account of Moses' death, showing how God used angels to bury Moses (1966, pp. 601-602). It is thought that *The Assumption of Moses*, at this point, used Zechariah 3:1-2 as its basis for the use of the phrase "The Lord rebuke you!" It has not been proven, however, that Jude intended to quote from *The Assumption of Moses*.

If Jude intended to reference it, it cannot be determined that Jude actually quoted the apocryphal book, because the material Jude allegedly quoted does not exist. If *The Assumption of Moses* did indeed contain material about Moses' burial, then Jude independently wrote the same thing that the writer of *The Assumption* wrote. Thus, Jude confirmed that this particular portion of *The Assumption* is historical. That is very different from stating that any portion of *The Assumption* was inspired. It may be that Jude simply intended to reference an oral tradition (which was true) that became the basis for *The Assumption* (Guthrie, 1962, p. 918).

Jude is the only New Testament book that seems to include a direct citation of a Jewish apocryphal work, which is, in this case, *The Book of Enoch* (Guthrie, p. 917). The apparent reference to Enoch's prophecy is in Jude 14-15. An example of the kind of criticism that comes against Jude 14-15 is that of Carroll D. Osburn, a distinguished professor of New Testament at Abilene Christian University. Dr. Osborn argued in his book *Peaceable Kingdom* (1993, p. 94) that Jude should not be included in the New Testament canon because, among other reasons, Jude 14-15 discusses an event that also is recorded in *The Book of Enoch*. Enoch's book apparently has more than one author, but scholars differ on which author wrote which portions, and it is uncertain when each portion was written. According to Sir Frederic Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, *The Book of Enoch* is pre-Christian, and parts of it are probably pre-Maccabean (1949, p. 246). However, there is no positive proof that *The Book of Enoch* existed as early as the time of Jude (Barnes, 1949, p. 400), or that it can even be traced back as far as the third century (Woods, 1962, p. 399). It is thought to have been written in Palestine. David Childress gave an overview of the history of *The Book of Enoch*:

> The apocryphal *Book of Enoch the Prophet* was first discovered in Abyssinia in the year 1773 by a Scottish explorer named James Bruce. Bruce, a sort of 18th Century Indiana Jones, may have seen the Ark of the Covenant at Axum (or its copy, as we surmise), and was able to obtain the ancient Coptic Christian text, approximately 2,000 years old. In 1821 *The Book of Enoch* was translated by Richard Laurence and published in a number of successive editions, culminating in the 1883 edition (2000, p. 328).

James C. VanderKam, in his book, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, claimed that Jude (in verses 14-15) quoted 1 Enoch 1:9 (1984, p. 110), and at first glance, that appears to be a correct assessment. First, consider Jude 14-15:

> Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Now notice the wording of 1 Enoch 1:9:

> And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly: and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

Several points should be considered about Jude's citation of Enoch's prophecy. Because it is so difficult to date the origin of *The Book of Enoch*, and because numerous portions of the book suggest that the writer was influenced heavily by the New Testament, Guy N. Woods, commentating on Jude, wrote:

> There are sharp variations between the statement allegedly cited by Jude and the actual statement as it appears in Jude. There is more reason for supposing that the book of Jude is older than this so-called "Book of Enoch" and that the author quoted from Jude rather than Jude from him! In the same fashion that Peter knew that Noah was a preacher, that Lot was vexed in Sodom, and that Paul knew the names of the Egyptian magicians; Jude learned of Enoch's prophecy—by inspiration (1962, p. 399).

Let us assume, for the sake of our study, that *The Book of Enoch* existed at the time that Jude wrote, and that Jude really was referencing it. Simply because Jude knew of Enoch's prophecy and approved it, does not necessarily imply that Jude certified the entire collection of Enoch's writings as inspired of God. The Greek word translated "prophesied" in Jude 14 is *propheteuo*, a word that is used on only one occasion in the New Testament (Matthew 15:7) for a citation of an Old Testament passage (Isaiah 29). The cognate Greek noun *prophetes*, which relates to the verb *propheteuo*, was used by Paul to refer to a heathen poet (Titus 1:12). There is no evidence, then, that Jude referred to Enoch's prophecy as an inspired work. Why, then, did Jude mention *The Book of Enoch*? He recognized that the prophecy of Enoch had turned out to be a true prophecy. Jude never gave indication of what he thought of the remainder of *The Book of Enoch*.

Many times in Scripture, inspired writers use other sources of information; sometimes these sources are inspired, and sometimes they are not. For an example, one occasion when an inspired writer used an uninspired source is in 1 Corinthians 10:4, where Paul apparently made a reference to Jewish legend to support his own inspired interpretation of Israel's wilderness wanderings (Lenski, 1937, pp. 392-393). On other occasions (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12-13), Paul quoted from pagan poets to support his own assertions, and even told his audiences that the specific portions of the pagan writings he referenced were accurate. Did Paul claim that these extrabiblical materials were inspired? Certainly not. Paul used supporting materials that would have been meaningful to his audiences. The noncanonical works that were cited by New Testament authors were highly respected. The fact that Paul used noncanonical sources to add an extra dimension to his message should not motivate us to regard any of Paul's writings as inferior, or to totally disregard them. The same is true in the case of Jude's epistle.

Further, Jude did not necessarily imply that Enoch saw into the future to predict attitudes or actions of the sinners under consideration in the epistle. All that is necessarily implied in Jude 14-15 is that Enoch's prediction happened to be descriptive of the men about whom Jude wrote (Barnes, 1949, p. 399).

We probably will never be sure when (or if) Jude received information from earthly sources about Enoch's writing or *The Assumption of Moses*. Perhaps Jude heard about it from traditional sources or from the books themselves, but this does not alter the fact that Jude was inspired of God. It is possible that the Holy Spirit, as He inspired Jude, certified that one particular portion of *The Book of Enoch* is correct, though not inspired. It is altogether certain, however, that despite critics' allegations, the Bible continues to stand firm as the sole message from the Creator—always accurate and dependable.

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