

The Book of I John

Day 1

The Background of I John

The author of I John: *The author is John, the Apostle of Jesus Christ. John, whose name means, “The Lord is gracious,” was born in Galilee, north of Jerusalem. John’s father’s name was Zebedee and his mother’s name is believed to be Salome. John also had a brother with who he appeared to be very close by the name James (Mark 3:17, Jude 1:1). John is believed to be a cousin of our Savoir Jesus Christ, as his mother was the sister of Jesus’ mother, Mary (Matt. 27:56, 61; Mark 15:41, 47, 16:1; John 19:25).¹ John, with his brother James, had the nickname of “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17; Luke 9:52-56), which probably meant that John had a fiery personality. John is believed to have had an intense, vigorous nature, but also was known for his love (Matt 20:20-28; Mark 9:38, 10:35; Luke 9:49, 54). Before John followed Jesus he worked for his father, Zebedee (Matt 4:21) as a fisherman. John did not receive formal training but was taught at home by his devout, Jewish parents. John was greatly loved by Jesus and was one of His closest companions (John 21: 7, 20). He was a leader of the church of Jerusalem before he began to oversee the churches in Asia Minor. John also wrote the books of II & III John, the gospel of John, and the book of Revelation. John died at the age of 100 years.*

Recipients of the letter: *John’s early ministry was to the churches around Jerusalem. The ministry of John was later moved to Asia Minor, after the destruction of the temple in 70 A. D. God had placed John right in the midst of many of the churches that were established by the Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. John, who lived in Ephesus, faithfully shepherded these churches in and around this city. As with every faithful shepherd, John had developed a deep and loving relationship with these believers of Asia Minor. Since John dearly loved his flock, he was always well aware of the circumstances which they were under. Therefore, when John heard that his beloved church was being infested with false teachers, he quickly wrote them so that they could be protected from the lies of these false teachers. This letter was written sometime between 80 and 90 A.D., and was specifically addressed to these churches that were under John’s special care.*

Tone of I John: *The book of I John is an intensely passionate letter from an aged, caring pastor to those to whom he has tirelessly trained and built up in the faith.*

Purpose of the letter: *The first purpose of this letter was to ground the believers in the assurance of their faith. He does this by clearly making evident those who had fellowship with God and those who did not have fellowship with God. The second purpose of this letter was to combat the false teachers or antichrists of the world that had been making their way into the church. The third purpose of this letter was to help the existing believers have confidence in their victory over sin, that they might experience the joy of their salvation.*

¹ DA Carson, The gospel according to John; Eerdmans Pg. 616

The need of the letter: John writes his letter to combat many of these false teachings that were threatening the church. Some of the threats to the church were: the love of the world, the denial of Jesus as God, the denial that Jesus came in the flesh, the denial of the importance of the death of Jesus, and the false belief that one could be without sin.

One individual that had confused the church was Cerinthus. Cerinthus, a Jew from Egypt, combined his Jewish beliefs with many of the strange beliefs of the day. He, with other false teachers, was making religions to fit their sinful lifestyles. Many of these teachers were characterized as being unloving. This man and some of his followers were at one time members of a church at Ephesus and had since left the church. Yet, they had kept in contact with some of the members and were causing confusion in the churches of Asia Minor.

Flow of I John: The structure of I John is very difficult to evaluate. The logical connections between thoughts are at times difficult to follow. Some scholars have characterized this letter as the ramblings of an old man. Nonetheless, this letter is not random in its thoughts, but has clear logical flow, despite some sharp transitions. The flow of the book can be broken down as follows:

The Study of I John

I John 1:1-4 ~ Most letters in the New Testament begin with a formal introduction such as II John and III John, including a description of the author, recipients, greeting, etc. However, John starts off his letter in a very abrupt and untraditional way. He starts by introducing the message (v.1 & 3) and person of his proclamation (v.2). As in John's gospel, he introduces Jesus Christ in a gloriously triumphant fashion. The content of his introduction is profoundly deep and complex. For example, most sentences' basic word order is subject – verb – object, but here John starts with the object (by means of a description), then the subject (Word of Life) and does not provide the verb until verse 3 (we proclaim)². Nevertheless, John's introduction is a beautiful presentation of a passionate pastor's plea for true fellowship and overwhelming obsession for his readers to understand the means (Jesus Christ) through which true fellowship comes. It should be noted that in Greek these first 3 1/2 verses form one long sentence³.

I John 1:1-4 ~ Since John's Savior and beloved friend Jesus Christ was under attack by these false teachers, John comes to His defense in these opening verses. In these first few verses John validates Jesus' existence through the evidence of his own existence. In verse 1, John gives four descriptions of the Word of Life. In verse 2, John stops his argument so that he can elaborate about the life of the Word. In verse 3a, John resumes his description of the Word of Life and shows his readers what he does with that glorious Word he has seen and heard (he proclaims It). Furthermore (verse 3b), John shows us the purpose behind his proclamation, which leads him to introduce his letter and why he wrote it. In these four verses, John silences the false teachers, these false teachers who

² Marshall pg. 100

³ Marshall Pg.99

are suggesting that Jesus did not come in the flesh, is not the means to the father, and is not the means of true joy.

Outline:

- I. Introduction to John's Message (1:1-4)
 - A. John's description of the revealed Word (message) of Life (Christ which brings life) (1:1-3)
 - 1. The Word of Life which was from the beginning (of Jesus' earthly Life) (1:1)
 - 2. The Word of Life which John is hearing (1:1)
 - 3. The Word of Life which John is seeing (1:1)
 - 4. The Word of Life which John beheld and handled with his own hands (1:1)
 - a. John's parenthetical description of "the life" (Christ which brings life) (1:2)
 - 1) The life was manifested ~ Incarnation (1:2)
 - 2) The life was completely seen (1:2)
 - 3) The life is being testified (1:2)
 - 4) The life is being proclaimed (1:2)
 - 5) The life which is eternal (1:2)
 - a) John illustrates the fact that this life is eternal by showing how it was with the father (1:2)
 - b) John illustrates the fact that this life is eternal by showing how it was manifested to us (1:2)
 - B. John's continuation (started in verse 1) of his description of the revealed Word of Life (1:1-3)
 - 1. The Word of Life which was seen (1:3)
 - 2. The Word of Life which was heard (1:3)
 - 3. The Word of Life which is being proclaimed for the purpose of the continuation in the partnership of Christ (1:3)
 - a. John's further description of this Partnership (1:3)
 - 1) This true Christian partnership is that which the apostle and readers have with the Father and with the Father's Son ~Jesus Christ (1:3)
 - C. John's description of the purpose of his letter (1:4)
 - 1. John's wants his readers and himself to experience the fullness of joy (1:4)

Bible Study:

- 1. According to verse 1, what four descriptions are given for the "Word of Life"?
- 2. What do you think John means when he says that the Word of Life which "was from the beginning"?
- 3. What do you think John means when he says that he had heard, seen, and touched the Word of Life?

4. Why do you think John speaks about how he had heard, seen, and touched the Word of Life?
5. What do you think John's term "Word of Life" means?
6. According to verse 2, what are five descriptions given for the Life of the Word?
7. When do you think the Life of the Word was manifested to us?
8. Why do you think John tells his readers that he has seen and heard the Word of Life, according to verse 2? (Hint: Remember that John was a disciple of Jesus and the false teachers did not believe that Jesus came to earth as a human.)
9. In what way do you think John is suggesting that the Life is eternal?
10. According to verse three, what is the message that John is proclaiming? (Hint: see verse 1)
11. For what purpose did John proclaim this message about the Word of Life, according to verse 3?
12. What do you think this fellowship is that John is referring to in verse 3?
13. According to the end of verse 3, with what two persons do Christians have fellowship?
14. What three names or titles are given for Jesus in verse 3?
15. What do you think is the relationship between the Christian's fellowship with one another and the Christian's fellowship with God?
16. According to verse 4, what is one goal John has in writing this letter?

Comments:

What does John mean by the term “Word of Life”? The “Word” (of “Word of Life”) refers to the message, which is clear by the fact that it is proclaimed. The “Life” (of “Word of Life”) refers to the person of the message ~ Jesus Christ, which is clear by the fact that John is able to hear, see, and touch it. It is further verified when John clarifies this word “life” in verse 2, because he describes this life as something which was manifested, seen, eternal, etc.

What is the primary focus of verse one? Due to the impersonal nature of the article “what” in Greek (which is at the beginning of all four object clauses) it is best to see the term “Word of Life” as referring primarily to the message of Jesus and not referring primarily to Jesus. This is confirmed in verse 2 by the fact that John creates a parenthetical sentence to address Christ primarily as the life of the Word. Therefore, in John’s mind the primary focus of verse one is on the message of Christ and the primary focus of verse two is on the person of Christ.

What is John meaning by the term “in the beginning”? This question is very complicated due to the overall complication of the long sentence. One’s interpretation is dependant on ones understanding of the primary focus of the term “Word of Life”. As stated above, the focus of the term “Word of Life” is on the message of Christ. Consequently, the best interpretation for “in the beginning” would be to see it as referring to the beginning of Christ’s public ministry, when John and the rest of the apostles began witnessing (hearing, seeing, and touching) Christ’s message. Therefore, the descriptions given in this verse have their primary focus on the message of Jesus Christ. John is then giving testimony to a message which he has heard, seen, and touched from the beginning. Thus the meaning of “in the beginning” will refer back to the message John has heard from the beginning of Christ’s public ministry or incarnation.

Why does John repetitively refer to how he has heard, seen and touched the Word of Life? In this introduction, John wants to immediately restore his beloved readers’ confidence in the person of Jesus Christ, because these false teachers were causing it to be disrupted. Therefore, John immediately discredits these unruly false teachers, who were denying the physical humanity of Jesus Christ. John states clearly and boldly his confidence in the person of Jesus Christ. He makes it clear to his readers, that he is a personal eyewitness of Jesus Christ. John makes his case by appealing to his senses as validating proof for Christ’s physical existence (heard, seen, and touched).

What is the fellowship that is referred to in verse 4? The basic meaning of this word refers to the one who is a partner or a shareholder with others in a common concern. (Luke 5:10). It is used to refer to Christians in respect to the gospel (1 Cor 9:23), faith (Phil. 6), sufferings (Phil 3:10), consolations (II Cor 1:7) tribulation, kingdom, perseverance (Rev. 1:9), Holy Spirit (II Cor 13:13; Phil 2:1), and future glory (I Pet. 5:1). The idea here is that of Christians sharing together in the life of Christ⁴.

⁴ Thomas 39

What is this joy that John is referring to in verse 4? The context reveals that this joy is dependant on a correct understanding of the message of Christ. This is made evident by the fact that the truth John is going to write will impact their joy. This is the same idea that Jesus had communicated to his disciples in John 17:13. This joy is based on truth not mystical experience, which was being propagated by these false teachers against whom John is fighting. True Christian joy is dependant on a person's fellowship with Christ and other Christians⁵.

Day 2

I John 1:5-2:17 ~ This section marks the beginning of the presentation of John's message which he introduced in 1:1-4. John begins his message by focusing on the issue of fellowship with God. This topic is probably addressed first as a result of the urgent need to strengthen the weakened faith of John's readers. These false teachers, who were claiming to have "true fellowship" with God, were attacking the faith of John's audience. Therefore, John authoritatively addresses this issue of fellowship. John starts this subject about fellowship by first focusing on the God with which these men are claiming to have fellowship (1:5). The theology that John sets forth in verse 5 about God will lay the foundation for John's discussion of true fellowship. After John lays his foundation about God, he begins to contrast the counterfeit claims of the false teachers against the biblical truths of real fellowship with God (1:6-2:2). Having silenced the false claims of biblical fellowship with God, John next provides biblical evidence for knowing one has true fellowship with God (I John 2:3-11). In this powerful section, John makes it clear that these evidences will be manifested in all who truly know God. According to I John 2:3-6, the biblical evidence for fellowship with God is a continual walking in obedience to God's commandments. Then, I John 2:7-11 John exemplifies the truth in 2:3-6 by looking at one of Christ's commands to love your neighbor (Matt 5:43-48). John states that true fellowship will prove its existence through obedience to God's commandments and one example of this will be love for your brother. Having stated the sobering proofs of true fellowship with God, John reassures his readers of their safe status as people who know God (2:12-14). These statements about a believer's victory over the evil one will provide the basis for his exhortation to Christians to not love the world (2:15-17). This last exhortation will show another example of evidence for those who have true fellowship with God (notice: they do not have love for the father, another commandment of Christ).

I John 1:5-2:2 ~ John having introduced the message and the purpose of the message (vs.1-4), he now unfolds the content of the message. In verse 5, he starts with the central theme or foundation of the content, namely that God is light and in him there is no darkness. John establishes this foundation of the character of God so that his readers can evaluate the truthfulness of the false teachers' claims of fellowship with God, which takes place from 1:6 through 2:2. Within this section, John sets forth his information in a very systematic way. First, he unfolds a false claim of these heretical teachers (see verses 6, 8, and 10). Next, he states the consequences of such wrong thinking ("we lie," "we deceive ourselves," "we make him a liar"). Then, John

⁵ Thomas 48

eloquently reveals the truth, which serves as a cure to the false teachers' claims, focusing on the person of Jesus (1:7, 9, 2:1-2)⁶.

Outline:

Content of John's Message (1:5-5:21)

D. Fellowship with God (1:5-2:2)

1. The foundation of fellowship with God (1:5)
 - a. God is light (1:5)
 - b. In God there is not darkness (1:5)
2. The clarification of who has fellowship with God: the false teachers' claims against the truthful promises from God's nature (1:6-2:2)
 - a. First set of ramifications in light of the false claims (1:6-7)
 - 1) The false teachers' claims (1:6)
 - a) The heretical claim of these false teachers: We can have fellowship with God, yet walk in a life style of sin (1:6a)
 - b) The damning consequences of these false teachers' claim (1:6b)
 - i) They Lie (1:6b)
 - ii) They don't practice the truth (1:6b)
 - 2) The truthful promise in light of God's nature (1:7)
 - a) The believer's position in light of God's nature: Believers who walk in the light as God is in the light (1:7a)
 - i) The joyful and incredible consequences of those who practice God's truth (1:7b)
 - (a) Believers will have fellowship with one another (1:7b)
 - (b) Believers will have the blood of Christ clean them from all Sin (1:7b)
 - b. Second set of ramifications in light of the false claims (1:8-9)
 - 1) The false teachers' claims (1:8a)
 - a) The heretical claim of these false teachers: They have no principle of sin from which they need to be cleansed (1:8a)
 - b) The damning consequences of these false teachers' claim (1:8b)
 - i) They persuasively lead themselves astray to embrace a path they know to be false (1:8b)
 - ii) The truth (Christ himself, the principle working in the saved) is not in their inward being (1:8b)
 - 2) The truthful promise in light of God's nature (1:9)
 - a) The believer's position in light of God's nature: A Christian who sees his sin and is continuously confessing it to God (1:9a)
 - i) The joyful and incredible consequences of those who practice God's truth (1:9b)
 - (a) God is Faithful (1:9b)
 - i. To forgive our sin (1:9b)
 - ii. To cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1:9b)
 - (b) God is righteous (1:9b)

⁶ Thomas pg. 58-59

- i. To forgive our sin (1:9b)
 - ii. To cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1:9b)
 - c. Third set of ramifications in light of the false claims (1:10-2:2)
 - 1) The false teachers' claims (1:10)
 - a) The heretical claim of these false teachers: They have not committed any acts of sin which needs to be cleansed (1:10a)
 - b) The damning consequences of these false teachers' claims (1:10b)
 - i) They make God to be a liar (1:10b)
 - ii) They refuse God's personal revelation of Himself to enter their inner being (1:10b)
 - 2) John's clarification behind the purpose of his previous writing (1:5-10) explained: That the believers will not sin at all (2:1a)
 - 3) The truthful promise in light of God's nature (2:1b-2)
 - a) The believer's position in light of God's nature: Any believer who sins (2:1b-2)
 - i) The joyful and incredible consequences of those who practice God's truth (2:1b-2)
 - (a) Believers have a Righteous Advocate (Jesus Christ) who is continually pleading before God the Father on our behalf (2:1b)
 - (b) The Righteous Advocate (Jesus Christ) Himself who became a wrath-removing sacrifice for the sins of the believer and for the whole world (2:2)

Bible Study:

1. What is the message that John has heard and is announcing to his readers according to verse 5?
2. How do you think the truth in verse 5 supports what John is going to say in 1:6-2:2?
3. What do you think John means when he says, "God is light?"
4. What do you think John means when he says "in Him there is no darkness?"
5. Why do you think John adds the words "at all" to the end of his sentence?
6. According to verse 6, what is the first false claim of these heretical teachers?
7. What do you think it means to "have fellowship with God"?

8. What do you think John is implying when he says “walk in darkness”?
9. To whom do you think the “Him” is referring in verse 6?
10. How do you think the heretical teachers’ false claims relate to John’s foundational statement in verse 5?
11. According to verse 6, what two facts are true about us if we walk in darkness when we say we have fellowship with God?
12. What do you think it means to “walk in the light”?
13. What are two results of those who walk in the light, as seen in verse 7?
14. According to verse 7, what covers us from all our sin?
15. According to verse 8, what is the second claim of these heretical teachers?
16. What two facts are true about us if we believe that the principle of sin is not in us?
17. According to verse 9, what will God do if we confess our sins?
18. What two descriptions are given about God in verse 9?
19. According to verse 9, from what does God forgive and cleanse us?
20. What do we say about God if we say we don’t sin?
21. According to verse 10, what is the third claim of these heretical teachers?
22. What do you think is the difference between the second (v.8) and third (v.10) claims of these false teachers?

23. What two facts are true about us if we believe that we do not sin?
24. According to John, how do these false claims in verse 10 make God a liar?
25. What do you think John means when he says “the truth is not in us?”
26. In what sense do you think the readers are John’s “little children?”
27. What reason does John give for writing 1:5-2:2 in verse 2:1?
28. In verse 1, what good news does John give to those who sin?
29. Who is our advocate before the Father?
30. What do you think John means when he says, “we have an advocate with the Father?”
31. What do you think John means when he calls Jesus “the righteous?”
32. What do you think John means when he says, “He Himself is the propitiation for our sins?”
33. According to 2:2, for what does Jesus propitiate?
34. To whom do you think John is referring when he says that Jesus is the propitiation “of the whole world?”

Comments:

What does John mean when he says that “God is light?” The meaning of this term is not totally clear. There are two main interpretations for the meaning of this phrase. The first interpretation is that this ‘light’ refers to “that aspect of the being or nature of God that is ethical or moral. It pictures purity and holiness (metaphorically) and thus defines the limits within which man’s fellowship with God must take place (1:6-2:2)⁷. The main thrust behind this interpretation is due to the clear moral idea which

⁷ Thomas pg. 55

is contextually being communicated. The second interpretation is that this ‘light’ refers to “the intelligent or communicative aspect of God’s nature. His self revelation implies His enlightenment, both of which are the controlling factors of fellowship between man and God. Light refers to the knowability of God.”⁸ The second interpretation holds that the “God is” formula is not a definition of who God is, but an identity revealed in terms of function⁹ and that the ethical aspect of the context flows not from whom God is but from whom He has revealed Himself to be¹⁰.

What does John mean when he says that “in Him there is no darkness?” This phrase here is clearly referring to error or sin. John is making it very clear that there is not even one speck of sin in God.

What does John mean by the term “walk” (in verses 6 and 7)? The term here in verses 6 and 7 refers to “The whole course of life, outward and inward¹¹.” It expresses not merely action, but also habitual action¹².” In continuation with the metaphor, John is not speaking of a step (one sin) but of continuous stepping (pattern of sin).

Is verse 7 saying that our walking in obedience is what saves us (thus, resulting in being saved by works)? The author is not implying that cleansing and forgiveness are a result of one’s works or behavior, but that our works or lifestyle will serve *as evidence* of our fellowship with God. These false teachers are claiming to have fellowship with God. John is saying that this is impossible, because if they had fellowship with God, who is light with no darkness, then these claims would be evidenced by an overall pattern of obedience. The same principle of truth applies on human terms as is shown by the common saying, “If you want to know the character of a man then you take a look at his friend.” Therefore, if you claim to have fellowship with God, then your behavior will be showing evidence of that reality.

Does verse 9 imply that a believer can have some sin that is not forgiven or cleansed? The answer is absolutely no! Both of these words are in Greek aoristically which “show the completeness of the two actions; God does each “as one great complete act – to justify and to sanctify wholly and entirely.”¹³”

What does this section say about a Christian’s salvation? One cannot study this section without stopping and pondering the incredible truths about our salvation. First John states in verse 1:7 that it is the precious blood of Jesus that cleanses us from *all* our sin. O how wonderful the sacrifice of Jesus is for us who are Christians! Without Jesus becoming the slain Lamb of God it would be impossible to have all our sin forgiven (all our sin must be forgiven, because God who is holy cannot be around

⁸ Thomas pg. 56

⁹ Brown pg. 229

¹⁰ Thomas pg. 56

¹¹ Law pg.372

¹² Plummer pg.25

¹³ Alford, IV, 430; Westcott Pg 21

sin). Secondly, in 2:1 John speaks of Jesus being our advocate with the Father. Jesus Himself pleads for our defense before God, confirming our eternal freedom from the punishment of sin. Lastly, John says in 2:2 that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. The word *propitiation* means *appeasement* or *satisfaction*. John is saying that Jesus became our wrath-removing sacrifice. Consequentially, God's wrath is removed against us and He is able to release us from our deserved punishment for sin. God's wrath was satisfied because Jesus took the punishment for our sin on Himself. These truths demand a response from those who read them. The only response fitting is humble, awe-exuberant praise. Pause and pray, wholeheartedly pondering on these truths.

Day 3

I John 2:3-2:6 ~ John, having introduced the central theme or foundation of his message (in verse 5) and having evaluated the truthfulness of the false teacher's claims of true fellowship with God (1:6- 2:2), now presents the evidence for how his readers can be confident that they have truly come to know God. It is important to understand that this section is not providing information of how to have fellowship with God, but rather is providing information on how to know you have fellowship with God. John is providing the true signs of spiritual life. Stated differently, John is showing his readers how they can know that they are products of God perfecting His love on them (see comments for explanation). The tone of this section differs from the previous section, from contrasting to proclaiming. In 2:3-6 John gives God's first proof of true fellowship (or God's work of grace), which is a lifestyle that keeps the commandments of Christ. The second proof of fellowship is found from 2:7-11, which is a life-style of loving people.

Outline:

3. The proof of fellowship with God (2:3-2:17)
 - a. The first proof of true fellowship with God: A continuous habit of keeping the commandments of Christ (2:3)
 - 1) The proof of true fellowship with God stated: A habit of keeping the commandments of Christ (2:3-6)
 - a) The proof of true fellowship with God explained through illustration (2:4-5a)
 - i) Illustrated Negatively (2:4)
 - (a) The words of one who does not have fellowship with God (a direct quotation from Paul's opponents): "I have come to know Him" (2:4a)
 - (b) The actions (character) of one who does not have fellowship with God: They do not keep God's commandments (2:4a)
 - (c) The facts about one who does not have fellowship with God (2:4b)
 - i. He is a liar (2:4b)
 - ii. He has an absence of truth in him (2:4b)

- ii) Illustrated positively (2:5a)
 - (a) The contrasting actions (character) of one who has fellowship with God: They keep God's commandments (2:5a)
 - (b) A fact about one who has fellowship with God: God has in the past perfected His love on him (2:5a)
- 2) The proof of true fellowship with God stated conclusively (being "in Him", speaking of true intimacy and permanence): He who has a habitual and permanent relationship with Christ will internally feel indebted to continuously walk as Christ walked (2:5b-6)

Bible Study:

1. According to verse 3, what can we know?
2. Who do you think John is referring to by the term "Him"?
3. What do you think John means when he speaks of having come to know God?
4. How can we know that we have come to know God, according to verse 3?
5. What do you think it means to keep His commandments?
6. According to verse 4, what claim is being made?
7. According to verse 4, what does the man not do?
8. Why do you think John calls this man a liar in verse 4?
9. What do you think John means when He says, "the truth is not in him"?
10. How does John describe the person's lifestyle in verse 5?
11. What does John say about the person in verse 5 who keeps God's Word?

12. What do you think John means when he says “in Him the love of God has truly been perfected”?
13. Why do you think John puts the word “truly” in the sentence?

14. According to verse 5, what do we know?

15. What do you think John means when he says “we are in Him”?

16. What is the claim of the person in verse 6?

17. What do you think John means by the term “abides in Him”?

18. What do you think is John’s logic behind saying that this professing person ought to walk in the same manner as Jesus?

19. Who is John referring to by the term “He walked”?

Comments:

What does it mean to know God (vs.3, 4)? This knowledge is not just an intellectual acquaintance or mystical experience, but involves intellect, heart, and will. This knowledge is something that is experienced day to day (present tense in Greek) and is constantly being confirmed within one’s heart. Furthermore, this knowledge is a completed work from the past, which has its manifested results continue until the present (perfect tense).¹⁴ According to the context, we learn that our love for God is perceived more and more clearly through its abiding results in a growing willingness to obey (or be uncontaminated by sin).¹⁵

What does John mean when he speaks of a person keeping His commandment/word (vs.3, 4, 5) or a person “abiding in Him”? These are all terms that show the pattern of one’s life. The word “keep” speaks of habit or ongoing pattern of one’s life (present tense).¹⁶ The word “abide” describes an intimate relationship, which involves personal determination and effort. This relationship also involves not leaving the realm or sphere in which one is found. The phrase involves not just faithfulness but faithfulness until He comes. (It should be noted that this term “abide” is used over 20 times in this epistle and nine times in this chapter 2:6, 10, 14,

¹⁴ Thomas Pg 104

¹⁵ Abbott-Smith, pg 92

¹⁶ Westcott Pg 50

17, 18, 24, 27, 27, 28).¹⁷ These phrases reveal that a Christian's relationship to God is a stable pattern of life, and is not motionless but is evidenced by the way a person walks.

What does John mean in verse 4 when he says “the truth is not in him”? By this term the author is saying that this man does not know the truth. The truth is not known by him because the absence of the truth's powerful transforming work is not evident. Clearly, the truth has not been able to do its sanctifying work since this man's intellect and entire nature have not been changed. Please don't allow the importance of truth to go unnoticed in this passage.

What does John mean when he says “in Him the love of God has truly been perfected”? This phrase reveals the true nature of God's saving love. First, this term reveals that it is God who chooses who will be the object of His love (passive in Greek). Here, and throughout this epistle, it is God who is always bestowing His spontaneous and unmerited love on us. Secondly, this term reveals the eternal nature of God's love in that it is something that is perfected in mankind (perfect in Greek) or something that has been made complete. Therefore, in light of the whole context, this verse is revealing the fact that when God chooses to completely and fully put His love on mankind it will be evident by the way in which the man keeps God's Word.

What does John mean when he describes a person as being “in Him”? This phrase speaks of the new, close, inseparable relationship between God and mankind. Jesus Himself in John 15 conveys the same idea when he refers to Himself as the vine and the believers as the branches. In Romans 6, Paul speaks of just the opposite that Christ is in us. Both ideas are conveying the fact that the believer's spiritual life is a result of one thing: their inseparable union or relationship with Christ Jesus.

Day 4

I John 2:7-11 ~From I John 2:3 to 2:6, John has been providing the biblical evidence or proof for those who have truly come to know God. According to I John 2:3-6, the foundational evidence of a person having true fellowship with God will be that they will walk in obedience to God's commandments. These evidences will be manifested in all who truly know God. Now in this section (2:7-11), John is going to exemplify his point just stated in 2:3-6 by looking at one of Christ's commands (Matt 5:43-48), loving your neighbor. What John is saying is that true fellowship will prove its existence through obedience to Christ's commandments, and one example of this will be love for your brother. This example is introduced in verses 7 and 8. Verse 7 introduces Christ's command from the perspective of its reader's reception. Verse 8 introduces Christ's command from the perspective of the history of Divine revelation. Then in verses 9-11 John is going to clearly state that obedience to Christ's command to love your neighbor will be the lifestyle for all those who truly know Christ. In verse 9, John is going to state his position negatively (looking at the deceived unbeliever). In verse 10, John is

¹⁷ Thomas pg. 115

going to state his position positively (looking at the true believer). Lastly, in verse 11, John is going to restate his position negatively (looking at the deceived unbeliever) but give a further diagnosis of this unbeliever's condition.

Outline:

- b. The proof of true fellowship with God exemplified with keeping the commandment of Loving your neighbor (2:7-11)
 - 1) The introduction of Christ's command to love your neighbor (2:7-8)
 - a) From the perspective of its reader's reception (2:7)
 - i) This commandment is not a new commandment (as the false teachers are claiming) (2:7a)
 - ii) The commandment is an old commandment (belonging to the first stage of the Christian church), which has been heard since the beginning of your Christian life (2:7b)
 - b) From the perspective of the history of Divine revelation (2:8)
 - i) John is writing a new commandment (in that it is different than what was given in the Old Testament) (2:8a)
 - ii) A commandment which is verified as truth in Christ (because he exemplified it) and in believers (because of their God given responsibility to obey it) (2:8b)
 - (a) The reason for why John's writing of this commandment is new: The darkness (that is false teaching of those John is combating) is being removed and the real light (the love which Christ modeled) is beginning to over-take the darkness (2:8c)
 - 2) The explanation of Christ's command to love your neighbor (2:9-11)
 - a) Negative explanation: Man who says one thing and acts contrary to his profession (2:9)
 - i) Profession: He is in the light (truth ~ loving his brother) (2:9)
 - ii) Actions: Hates his brother (failure to care for the needs) (2:9)
 - iii) Result: He is in darkness (not loving his brother) (2:9)
 - b) Positive explanation: Man who makes no profession but lives the truth (2:10)
 - i) Actions: Loves his brother (2:10)
 - ii) Result: He abides in the light (2:10)
 - iii) Result: There is no cause of stumbling in him (2:10)
 - c) Negative explanation restated and clarified: Man whose actions show he is in darkness has blinded eyes (2:11)
 - i) Actions: Hates his brother (2:11)
 - ii) Result: He is in darkness (2:11)
 - iii) Result: He is walks in darkness (2:11)
 - iv) Result: He does not know where he is going (2:11)
 - v) Final result explained: The darkness has blinded his eyes (2:11)

Bible Study:

1. Why do you think John calls his readers “beloved” in verse 7?
2. In what sense do you think this command which John is writing is not new?
3. In what sense do you think John’s readers have had this commandment of Christ’s since the beginning?
4. What do you think John is referring to in verse 7 by the phrase “from the beginning”?
5. By what means do you think these readers have heard this old commandment?
6. In what sense do you think this command which John is writing is new?
7. In what sense do you think this new commandment is “true in Him”?
8. In what sense do you think this new commandment is “in you”?
9. What do you think John is referring to when he refers to this “darkness” which is passing away?
10. What do you think John is referring to when he refers to this “true light” which is already shining”?
11. What is the profession of this man in verse 9?
12. What do you think John means when he refers to being “in the light”?
13. What is the lifestyle of this man in verse 9?
14. What do you think John means by the phrase “hates his brother” in verse 9?

15. According to John, what is the condition of this man in verse 9?
16. What do you think John means when he says that this man is in “darkness until now?”
17. According to verse 10, what is the lifestyle of the person who abides in the light?
18. What do you think it means to “abide in the light”?
19. What do you think John is talking about when he says, “there is not cause of stumbling in him?”
20. What are three truths about a person who hates his brother, according to verse 11?
21. In what sense do you think that a person who walks in darkness “does not know where he is going?”
22. According to verse 11 why do unbelieving people walk in darkness?
23. What do you think John means when he says, “the darkness has blinded his eyes”?

Comments:

How can the commandment in verse 7 and 8 be both new and old? By reading this at first glance it can be quite confusing. However, with an understanding of the background of the false teachers who were threatening the church these two verses become very understandable. John’s goal in these two verses is to introduce Christ’s commandment to love, so that he can make his point of Christian evidences. However, in introducing this topic of love he does not want it to be confused with the false teacher’s new commandment. Therefore, John introduces Christ’s commandment from two different perspectives. First, he introduces (v.7) Christ’s commandment from the perspective of the reader’s reception. That is to say that this commandment is old compared to the newest commandment being given by these false teachers. Secondly, John introduces this commandment from the perspective of the history of Divine revelation. This is to say that from the perspective of God’s revelation (the Old Testament versus the New Testament, the teaching of the prophets

versus the apostles, or the revelation of God the Father versus God the Son) which means that Christ's commandment would be a new teaching. Consequently, this teaching is old in that it belongs to the first stage of the Christian church and not the second stage of the church, which is being influenced by these new false teachings. This teaching is new in that it does not belong to the first stage of God's revelation (the Old Testament) but to the second stage of God's revelation (the New Testament).

What is this darkness that is passing away and this true light that is already shining in verse 8? The question for interpretation as it pertains to this question is, "What is this darkness?" and "What is this light?" There are three good views given for this darkness by scholars. One, it is spiritual darkness resulting from sin.¹⁸ Two, it is the error of heresy that the writer is combating.¹⁹ Three, it is the darkness of paganism that once shrouded the readers.²⁰ The problem with the interpretation of this imagery is that it has been used in other places to refer to different things. However, each individual context needs to have its meaning determined by the use of its own imagery. Therefore, it appears that the best interpretation would be view two in light of the fact that the contrast at hand is between old teaching and new teaching. Paganism and sin are not found anywhere in the immediate context. Therefore, the light would refer to the love commanded and demonstrated by Jesus Christ.²¹ As a result, this darkness is the wrong teaching of the false teachers, which is leaving God's church. The light is the correct teaching of Jesus Christ about love, which is now shining forth. The main distinction between Christ's teaching and the teaching of the false teachers pertains to exclusiveness.²²

In what sense is this new commandment, which is a fact, in Him and in the believers to whom John is writing? The commandment is true (a fact or verified) in Him (which is Christ) in that he gave it and exemplified it. The commandment is true in you (which are the believers in John's church and also applies to believers of all times) in that the believers will manifest this love by nature of Christ being in us and giving us the responsibility of obeying it. This verse is showing the readers that they have a new relationship to the word of God in that it resides within them, inscribed on the passions of their hearts (Jer. 31:27-34).

What does John mean by the term "hates his brother" in verse 9? The term hate is not necessarily (since it is an absolute, which reveals no specific degree or manifestation of hatred²³) a vengeful, bitter, angry feeling toward your brother, it can be much calmer than that. The word here is being contrasted with the term love, which is to care for the needs of others. Therefore, to hate is to fail to reach out and universally care for the needs of others. As James 2:14-15 says, "What use is it, my

¹⁸ Westcott, pg. 54

¹⁹ Robertson, word pictures, VI, 200, 212

²⁰ Lenski p.413

²¹ Barclay pg. 54-55

²² Brook pg.268

²³ Thomas 138

brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one says to them, 'go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?"

What does John mean by the phrase "there is no cause of stumbling in him?"

This is a profound statement from the great aged apostle. What he is showing is that the one who loves is in a happier and safer position than the one who does not love. The one who hates will get himself caught in sin, whereas the one who loves will be protected from stumbling into sin. The exact or specific understanding of what John means by the term stumbling is not completely clear, but it relates to sin in some regard (see also: John 11:9, 10). This truth must be heard loudly ~ Love protects, love protects! John is saying to his readers, "Please, choose the wise path! Love will give you the ability to see the right path to follow as you travel down the road of life."

In what way does the one who hates his brother "not know where he is going" in verse 11? This is the understanding that all of scripture reveals for the unbelieving world. It speaks of how unbelievers are not in control of themselves, but are controlled by their sin natures. They are spiritually blind and unable to walk in the right path. This is why Jesus Christ said on the cross (Luke 23:34), "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Paul said in I Corinthians 2:14 that the things of the Spirit are foolishness to an unbeliever and cannot be understood. In I Timothy 1:13, Paul speaks of how before he was saved he "acted ignorantly and in unbelief." This is why the most loving thing a believer can do for an unbeliever is to show him the light of the powerful gospel, that his blind eyes might be opened.

I John 2:12-17 ~ In this section, the writer is now going to turn his attention from the fundamental issues of evidences of knowing God to the reassuring facts of his believing reader's safe status as people who know God (2:12-14). Having stated the sobering proofs of true fellowship with God, John now wants to encourage his readers with the wonderful truths of their victory in Christ. In verse 12, John addresses the church at large (little children). In verse 13-14, John addresses his readers based on their age specifications (fathers, young men, and children). These statements (12-14) will provide the basis for John's exhortation to Christians to not love the world (2:15) and is followed by a caution, stating the impossibility of a true believer living in the continuous position of such worldly affection. In verse 16, John is going to caution his readers by explaining with great clarity why a true believer can't love the world. This last exhortation (2:15-17) will serve both as an encouragement and as another example of evidence for those who have true fellowship with God (notice they do not have love for the Father, another commandment of Christ's).

Outline:

4. John's reassuring confidence in his reader's true fellowship (or safe status) with God (2:12-14)
 - a. Expressed through what John is writing (2:13-14)
 - 1) Little Children: His readers (2:12)

- a) Because their sin has been forgiven (from time past to the present) for the sake of Christ's name (2:12)
 - 2) Fathers: Aged and spiritually mature (2:13)
 - a) Because they intimately know Him (Christ) who was from the beginning (of Christ ministry) (2:13)
 - 3) Young men (ages 24 to 40) (2:13)
 - a) Because you have overcome (conquered) the evil one (devil) (2:13)
 - 4) Children (2:13)
 - a) Because you are intimately known by the father (2:13)
 - b. Expressed through what John has written (2:14)
 - 1) Fathers (2:14a)
 - a) Because you know Him who was from the beginning (2:14a)
 - 2) Young men (2:14b)
 - a) Because you are (spiritually and morally) strong (2:14b)
 - b) Because the word of God abides in you (2:14b)
 - c) Because you have overcome the evil one (2:14b)
5. John's passionate exhortation in light of John's confidence in his reader's true fellowship with God (this also serves as a third proof of fellowship with God) (2:15-17)
- a. John exhortation stated: (2:15a)
 - 1) Stop loving the world! (2:15a)
 - 2) Stop loving the things in the world! (2:15a)
 - b. John exhortation cautioned: (2:15b-17)
 - 1) If anyone continuously loves the world, love for the father is not in him (2:15b)
 - a) John's caution explained (2:16)
 - i) The things in the world are not from the father (2:16)
 - ii) The things of the world are from the world (2:16)
 - (a) John's description of the things in the world (2:16)
 - i. The lust of the flesh (2:16)
 - ii. The lust of the eyes (2:16)
 - iii. The boastful pride of life (2:16)
 - (b) John's description of the foolishness of loving the things of the World (2:17)
 - i. The world and its lusts are passing away (2:17)
 - ii. The one who does the will of the father lives forever (2:17)

Bible Study:

1. To whom is John writing in verse 12?

2. Who do you think John is referring to when he speaks of "little children?"

3. What does John say is true about His “little children”?
4. According to verse 12, for what purpose have our sins been forgiven?
5. To what do you think John is referring when he says “you have known Him who was from the beginning”?
6. According to verse 13, who have the young men overcome?
7. For what purpose do you think John changes from saying, “I am writing” (v.12-13) to “I have written” (v.14)?
8. Why do you think John repeats his same message to the fathers (see 13 & 14)?
9. In verse 14, what three truths does John say about the young men?
10. In verse 15, what are two things that John tells his readers not to love?
11. What does John say in verse 15 is true of people who love the world?
12. What does John say is not of the Father according to verse 16?
13. What do you think is the “lust of the flesh?”
14. What do you think is the “lust of the eyes?”
15. To what do you think the “boastful pride of life” is referring?
16. According to verse 16, from where does the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life come?
17. According to verse 17, what will happen to the world and its lusts?

18. What is the result of those who do the will of God?

Comments:

Why does John change tense in his address to his readers (12-14) from “I am writing” to “I have written”? The answer to this question is not easy to fully understand. However, the most logical explanation is that John changed tenses for emphasis purposes, putting emphasis on the certainty of John’s statements. John is saying, “These truths about a believer’s secure status in God are true as I am writing them (present tense) and now that I have written them (past tense).”²⁴

Why does John refer to his readers as children, young men, and fathers? The writer uses these various terms to affectionately describe his fatherly love and concern for his readers. The first term “My children” refers to a general address to all the author’s children. The latter terms (fathers, young men, and children) are then primarily divided based on their various ages.²⁵

What is this forgiveness talked about in verse 12? The word here for forgiveness is a perfect passive in Greek, indicating that the sins have been forgiven since the time of conversion to the present.²⁶ The same idea was communicated in I John 1:9. When a sinner truly repents of his sin, God completely forgives him from all his past, current, and future sin. This forgiveness is central to the gospel message (Luke 24:47; Acts 13:38).

In what sense do these fathers (older believers both physically and spiritually) experience God from the beginning? The knowledge in which John is referring is intimate, experiential knowledge which is gained through maturity; not to be confused with any mystical experiences (which these false teachers claimed) but through historical observation (physically seeing Jesus). Furthermore, this knowledge has been acquired in the past and is still abiding up to the present.²⁷

In what sense have young men overcome the “evil one” (Devil)? These young men, who are men from ages 24 to 40 years of age, full of vigor and strength²⁸ are described as victorious or conquerors. This victory is a fact made possible by Christ through his death and resurrection and is something that has become a reality for these young men after their conversion and is enduring until the present. This victory is over sin and the spiritual battles in which Satan has opposed them.²⁹ It is very important for one to understand that if he is saved he has victory over Satan. His victory is completed and finished! The only way Satan can hurt a believer is if he listens to his lies and submits to his tyranny. The believer has power over Satan

²⁴ Stott pg 147

²⁵ Thomas pg 149

²⁶ Stott pg 97

²⁷ Marshall Pg 139

²⁸ Thomas pg 158

²⁹ Lenski pg 419

because Jesus Christ is in him and He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. This term for Devil is used four times in this epistle (2:14; 3:12; 5:18, 19), once in John's gospel (John 17:15), and once in Matthew's gospel (13:19).

What is John saying about loving the world? The word for love here is a supreme, surrendering love, which is to be only for God. Furthermore, this love is continuous and habitual in nature (present tense) and cannot possibly exist in the heart of a true believer, because it is contrary to loving God (2:14; 4:16; James 4:4; Matt 6:24). This love would involve one's interests, time, mind, resources, actions, and affections. The general object of this love is the world (referring to the morally evil world in its totality or all that is alienated, opposed, or rival to God) and the specific objects of this love are the things of this world. The things of this world are clarified by the three following (genitive) clauses: the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life.

What does John mean by the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life? “*The lust* (the sensual part of the inward person, which one gives over to sin) *of the eyes*” takes place when a man uses the eyes which God has given to perceive and dwell on those things to the point of giving them over to his lustful desires. The “*lust of the flesh*” is the same as the lust of the eyes but involves touch or the body's involvement instead of the eyes. The “boastful pride of life” is one finding satisfaction through receiving praise, flattery or to impress others. This passion to receive praise is often demonstrated through achievements, possessions or one's personality. John makes it unbelievably clear that the pattern of this type of behavior cannot exist in the life of a believer. There is no compatibility or agreement between love for the world and love for God; they are mutually restricted from one another. John also shows the stupidity of loving these things by revealing their temporal, passing nature.

What does John mean when he says that the one who does the will of God will live forever? The one who does the will of the father is the one who continually or habitually (present participle) lives fulfilling God's desires or commands (remember, not a means to salvation but an evidence of salvation). The phrase “he will live forever” is used 12 times and is speaking of the promised eternal life in heaven. A great cross reference would be John 8:51. For this future life, a believer longs and waits eagerly.

Day 5

I John 2:18-27 ~ John, after exhorting his readers to not love this world or the things of this world, now transitions to a new subject, the subject of false teachers or antichrists. The bridge which John uses to transition between both subjects is John's explanation of the foolishness of living for a world which is passing away. John's transitional thought is that the world is passing away. One of the primary signs before the world passes away is the presence of the “antichrist”. Therefore, John in verse 18 announces to his readers the fact that “it is the last hour” and that the Antichrist is coming. Furthermore, John alarms his readers with the fact that even right now antichrists have appeared. In verses 19-25, John makes his teaching very personal to

his readers by relating his teaching directly to them. In verse 19, John shows how these antichrists came from among his reader's midst. However, he clarifies how these men were not really a part of them (in the sense of being true Christians), because of their failure to remain within them. In verses 20 and 21, John comforts his readers by explaining the effects of their relationship with God (v.20) and how this impacts their knowledge of the truth. In these verses, John separates his readers from these false teachers, by assuring in their minds that he does not consider them to be false teachers, which leads John to describe with detail the characteristics of these false teachers (verses 22 and 23). Since John has made it clear to his readers that Jesus Christ has enabled them to know the truth (20-21) and that these false teachers oppose the truth (22-23), John exhorts his readers to hold firm, remaining in the truth (in both the Father and the Son) that they have already known since the beginning of their salvation (24). John makes it clear that the result of such faithfulness will be the promised eternal life (25). John finishes this section by applying this teaching to the purposes for which he has written. He makes it clear that the reason he is writing is to try to encourage his readers to remain on in the faith (v.27b), (he is not writing to teach them, since they have the anointing and are taught all things ~v.27a) since they are right now being attacked by these false teachers to try and lead them away from the truth (26).

Outline:

6. John's announcement presented (2:18)
 - a. Of the current time: It is the last hour (2:18)
 - b. Of the future false teacher: The antichrist is coming (2:18)
 - c. Of the current false teachers or situation: Many antichrists have appeared
 - d. John's announcement concluded with a statement of certainty: We know that it is the last hour (2:18)
7. John's announcement applied to John's readers (2:19-25)
 - a. The location of these current antichrists: "From us, it is true, they went out"³⁰
 - 1) Past location: From us (in the visible Christian community) (2:19)
 - 2) Current location: They went out (voluntarily separated themselves) (2:19)
 - b. The true picture of these current antichrists: They were not really of us (inner life was foreign) (2:19)
 - 1) John's explanation for why these men are antichrists and not true Christians (2:19)
 - a) Positive explanation: They would have remained
 - b) Negative explanation: They would not have went out
 - c) Purpose explained: It (these actions) might be shown (clearly make known) that every single one of these false teachers are not Christians (2:19)
 - c. The true picture of the believers in John's Church (2:20-21)
 - 1) They have an anointing (Holy Spirit) from the Holy One (Jesus Christ) (2:20)

³⁰ Westcott pg.70

- 2) They all know (all believers have access to true knowledge, it is not limited to only the elite) (2:20)
 - a) John reassures his readers by explaining his perspective of them (2:21)
 - i) John reassures his readers by telling them that he is not writing because he sees them as false teachers (2:21a)
 - ii) John reassures his readers by telling them that he is writing them because they know the truth (2:21b)
 - iii) John reassures his readers by telling them that he is writing them because the false teachers lies cannot find a home in the truth they already possess (2:21c)
 - d. The true identity of the one who is a false teacher (or liars) outside of John's Church (2:22-24)
 - 1) He is the one that denies that Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ) (2:22a)
 - 2) He is the one that is the antichrist (2:22b)
 - 3) He is the one that denies the Father
 - 4) He is the one that denies the Son
 - a) John's true identity of the one who is a false teacher explained more fully (2:23)
 - i) Expanded negatively: The one denying the Son, does not even have (or intimately know) the father either (2:23a)
 - ii) Expanded positively: The one confessing the Son, has (or intimately knows) the father also (2:23b)
 - e. John's exhortation to his readers to abide in the truth they heard from the beginning (2:24)
 - 1) John's exhortation stated: Abide in the truth you have heard from the beginning (2:24a)
 - 2) John's exhortation explained: If you abide in the truth, you will abide in both the son and the father (2:24b)
 - 3) John's exhortation motivated: By the expectation of partaking in Jesus' promise of eternal life (2:25)
8. The purpose behind John's announcement ~ I John 2:18-25 (2:26-27)
 - a. John's purpose stated: He is writing because of those who are right now trying to lead you away from the truth (2:26)
 - 1) John's confidence in readers despite his warning expressed (2:27)
 - a) His readers have received an anointing from Christ (2:27)
 - b) His reader have an anointing which abides in them (2:27)
 - i) The results of this anointing elaborated (2:27)
 - (a) You have no need for anyone to keep on teaching you (2:27)
 - (b) Christ anointing (and no one else's) continuously teaches about all things (2:27)
 - i. John affirms the truthfulness of his readers anointing: it is true and is not a lie (2:27)

- ii. John indicates the proper application appropriate in light of his readers anointing: Just as the anointing has taught you, you abide in Him ~ Christ (2:27)

Bible Study:

1. Do you think there is any relationship link in thought between 2:17 and 2:18?
2. Why do you think John addresses the believers in verse 18 as “little children”?
3. According to John, what time is it currently?
4. According to verse 18, who does John say is coming?
5. What does John say in verse 18 has already appeared?
6. According to verse 18, how do we know it is the last hour?
7. In verse 19, who is John speaking of when he says, “They went out from us”?
8. What does John reveal about where these false teachers were residing?
9. What would these men have done if they were really Christians, according to verse 19?
10. Why did these antichrists leave the church according to verse 19?
11. In verse 20, what does John say that we have received from the Holy One?
12. What does John reveal to be one result of this anointing?
13. What do you think John means by “you know all” in verse 20?
14. For what purpose did John not write this letter, according to verse 21?

15. For what purpose did John write this letter, according to verse 21?
16. What do you think John means when he says “no lie is of the truth?”
17. According to verse 22, by what three characteristics can a liar (false teacher or antichrist) be identified?
18. What do you think John means by the statement “denies Jesus is the Christ?”
19. In what way do you think a person can deny the Father?
20. In what way do you think a person can deny the Son?
21. What does verse 23 say is the result of those who deny the Son?
22. What does verse 23 say happens when someone truly confesses the Son?
23. According to verse 24, what does John exhort these people to do?
24. According to verse 24, what do you think it means to abide in the Son of God?
25. What do you think John is referring to when he speaks of this truth which one has heard “from the beginning?”
26. According to verse 25, what promise did Jesus (intensified by the word himself) give his followers?
27. In verse 25, what is the significance of this word John uses to describe “life?”
28. What did John do as a result of these men trying to deceive his people, according to verse 26?

29. According to verse 27, how did John's readers get this anointing?
30. Where exactly does this anointing abide?
31. What are two results of this anointing (or Holy Spirit) abiding in believers?
32. What do you think John means by his statement "and is true and is not a lie"?
33. According to verse 27, in what is John exhorting his people to abide?

Comment:

Who is this Antichrist that John has described in verse 18? The word antichrist is a compound word with the literal meaning (*anti*) "over against, opposite" or "instead of, in place of" and (*Christos*) "Messiah or Christ."³¹ This man is one who will claim to be the Messiah, perform many miracles, and deceive the world. The term and understanding originates from the book of Daniel (Dan 8:13; 9; 11:31; 12:11) but is also spoken of in other parts of God's Word (Matt. 24:15; Deut 13:2-6; 18:15-20; Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). The clearest teaching of this antichrist is from II Thes. 2:1-12. He will be a man who performs the abomination of desecration.

What does John mean by his statement "it is the last hour"? The word has its roots in the Old Testament (Gen. 49:1; Num. 24:14; Ish. 2:2; Mic.4:1; Hos. 3:5; Jer. 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39). The last hour is speaking of time in relationship to the "Messianic age and the culmination of the Kingdom of God."³² It refers to the whole time between the first and second coming of the Messiah Jesus (Acts 2:17; II Peter 3:8; I Cor 7:29,31; Phil 4:5; Heb 10:25,37; James 5:8; I Pet 4:7; Rev 22:20), which is specifically addressed by John in verse 28 of this same chapter. John also uses the term the last day referring to the terrible day of God's judgment (John 12:48) and the resurrection of the dead (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24). Other New Testament writers speak of the last days (I Tim 4:1; II Tim 3:1; James 5:3; I Pet. 1:5; Jude 18). From a human standpoint this term "the last hour" can be deceiving due to the fact that 2000 years have passed. However, I Peter 3:8 makes it clear that "with the Lord a day is like a thousand years."

In what sense were these false teachers a part of these believers? John makes it clear in verse 19 (by the location of this phrase) that these false teachers are literally "from us, it is true, they went out."³³ John's reference "from us" speaks of how these false teachers at first belonged to the visible outward Christian Community. This is

³¹ Thomas 177

³² Abbott-Smith, pg 182

³³ Westcott pg 70

shocking because the passage makes it clear that it was impossible to distinguish them from those who were truly born again. It should be emphatically noted that these men were never truly Christians, which became evident by their voluntary separation from the true Christian community (v.19). John makes it clear that if they were truly believers they would have remained – until now (remained is a pluperfect).

What is this anointing mentioned in verse 20? The biblical understanding of anointing comes from the Old Testament practice in connection with priests (Ex. 28:37; Lev 6:22; Num 35:25), kings (I Sam 9:16; 15:1; 16:3), and prophets (I Kings 19:16; 61:1; Luke 4:18). This anointing sets men apart in a special way from others for service and was often accompanied by the Holy Spirit with special powers or gifts of enablement (I Sam 16:13). One great example of this is seen in the baptism of Jesus (Acts 10:37-38). Nevertheless, this anointment spoken of here by John is different from that which was practiced in the Old Testament in that this anointing does not involve oil, does not involve a prophet, does not involve a special position, and is not limited in nature. This anointing, John makes clear, is from Christ (“the Holy One”), involving the internal dwelling of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13), for all believers (“you” speaking of all the Christians), and is permanent in nature (Eph 1:14). According to this passage, this anointing enables Christians to know the truth and be taught all things (v.20 and 27).

Who is this “Holy One” who gives believers this anointing in verse 20? This “Holy One” is most likely Jesus. The reasoning for this interpretation is the fact that nowhere in the New Testament is the title “Holy One” applied to the Father. However, Jesus is called the “Holy One” several times in the New Testament (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69; Acts 3:14; Rev 3:7) and two of these times by John himself (John 6:69; Rev 3:7).

In what sense do believers “know about all things”? This phrase must be understood in light of the false teacher’s claim to knowledge. The false teachers were claiming to have special hidden knowledge, which was unknown to them. This created fear and an inferiority complex, which John wanted to correct. Therefore, he tells them, “no, don’t listen to these false teachers! You know all things. You don’t need these false teachers to teach you, because the Spirit of God keeps on teaching you all things.” The Spirit of God teaches us by giving us understanding of the word of God, which goes beyond the intellect to transform the soul (I Cor 2:14-15)! In John’s day God spoke through the Apostles, whereas today, God speaks through His Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit teaches us in the same way during both times, providing believers understanding (Rom 3:10-11).

Review Questions for I John:

1. Fellowship with God is made possible through whom?

2. What are some characteristics of a life that has been born of God?
3. According to John, what has Jesus done for the salvation of His children?
4. What traits does John give for helping His people identify antichrists?
5. Why can a Christian not completely abandon the truth of God's Word?
6. What is the relationship between being a Christian and loving others?
7. What test does John give for testing the spirits?
8. What proof does John give to prove that Jesus is the Son of God?
9. In what way does the confidence we have in Jesus being the Son of God impact our lives?
10. In what way has the book of I John most impacted your life?