

**The Pilgrim Way Commentary on
the Epistles of John**



**A Reference Commentary
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Apology for This Work

This commentary on the Epistles of John follows in a long line of other works by divines of the past as they have sought to study and expound these precious epistles.

This work grew out of over 30 years of both preaching through these epistles in three pastorates in Maryland, Delaware and North Carolina as well as teaching through them as an instructor at Maryland Baptist Bible College in Elkton, Maryland. I needed my own notes and outlines as I taught and preached from 1-3 John, so this fuller commentary flows from those notes and outlines. Thus, the layout of this commentary is a practical one, written by a preacher to be preached from in the pulpit or to be taught in a Sunday School. It was not written from an isolated study of a theologian who had little contact with people or practical ministerial experience. There are many such commentaries on the market and they tend to be somewhat dull and not very practical in their application. It is written as something of a theological reference manual to me, filled with quotes and outlines from various books in my library. The layout and format are designed to help me in my preaching, teaching and personal study of this book. I figured there may be others out there who may benefit from this work which is why I make it available, but the work is basically laid out in a selfish manner, for my benefit and assistance. You, as the reader, hopefully can find some profit in this.

This commentary cannot be easily classified into any single theological system and that is by design. I believe that no single theological system is an accurate presentation of Scriptural truth in and of itself. When Charles Spurgeon wrote "There is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else", he displayed a most unfortunate theological bias. Calvinism is a human, flawed, limited and uninspired theological system, as any other human theological system. There is some truth there, as there is in any theological system, but it ranks no better than other competing systems, such as Arminianism (which is nothing more than a modified version of Calvin's teachings), dispensationalism, covenant theology, Lutheranism, Romanism, Orthodox theology, pre-wrath rapture, take your pick. All these systems are flawed as they are all the products of human attempts to understand and systematize Biblical presentations. They can all make contributions to our overall understandings of the truth but none may claim to be the only correct such presentation, at the expense of all others. Knowing the human impossibility for absolute neutrality and the human love for theological systems, I readily admit that I cannot be as dispassionate and uninfluenced by human teachings in these pages as I would like. No man can be. But I have made every attempt not to allow my own personal systems influence my understanding of what the clear teachings of Scripture is. I do identify with premillennialism and dispensationalism, but even my dispensationalism is used mainly as an interpretative tool.

I have freely consulted a wide variety of commentaries and sermons for insights and other views of various texts that I might have missed. As the old preacher once remarked "I milked a lot of cows but I churned my own butter." Direct quotes are attributed to their proper source to prevent that unpardonable sin of literary theft. But simply because I quoted a writer should not be viewed as an endorsement of all that he wrote or of his theological system. I selected the quote because I found it interesting and useful, not because I am in any degree of agreement regarding the rest of his teachings.

This commentary is based on the text of our English Received Version, commonly referred to as the King James Version or the Authorized Version. I believe that this is the most preserved English translation available to us and that it is the superior translation in English. I can see no

good reason to use or accept any of the modern versions, especially the current “flavor of the month” of the New Evangelicals and apostate fundamentalists, the corrupt and mis-named English Standard Version. When it comes to these modern, critical text versions, I reject them for a variety of reasons. One major reason is that they have not been proven on the field of battle. I have liver spots older than the English Standard Version, but I am expected to toss my English Received Text, over 400 years old, and take up this new translation, whose ink is still barely dry? How many battles has the ESV won? How many missionaries have done great exploits with an NIV? What revivals have been birth and nurtured with an NASB? We will stick with the translations and texts that our fathers have used and that God has blessed. It is too late in Church history to change English translations. We are also favorably inclined to the Geneva Bible, Tyndale Bible, Bishops Bible, and other “cousins” of our English text. The Greek text used is the underlying text of our English Received Text and its 1769 revision, which is the text most widely in use today by God’s remnant. This is the Greek text that forms the foundation for the Authorized Version..

The presupposition of this commentary is that what the Bible says is so and that we will not change the text to suit our theological fancy. It says what it says and that is what we must accept, else we will be found unfaithful stewards of the Word of God, a judgment we fear. We will not amend our text but will take it as it is the best we can.

This commentary certainly is not perfect, nor is it the final presentation of my understanding and application of these epistles. A commentary over 30 years in the making can never truly said to be finished. As new insights are granted by the Holy Spirit and as my understanding of the epistle deepens, additional material will be added and sections will have to be re-written. One is never truly “finished” with any theological book. As one deepens and grows in his relation with the Lord, so does his theological understandings and that should be reflected in one’s writings.

It is my sincere prayer that this unpretentious contribution to the body of Christian commentary literature will be a blessing to the remnant of God’s saints in the earth as we approach the coming of our Lord.

Booklist on 1,2,3 John

The following reviews are taken from the following sources:

Biblical Viewpoint, Bob Jones University
\$ *Commenting and Commentaries*, by Charles Spurgeon
% *The Minister's Library*, by Cyril Barber
* *An Introduction to the New Testament*, by D. Edmond Hiebert
^ *Tools for Preaching and Teaching the Bible*, by Stewart Custer
@ *The Master's Journal*, The Master's Seminary
! *New Testament Commentary Survey* by D. A. Carson
Remarks by the author, Dr. John Cereghin, are not marked.

This list is given for reference and the comments are those of the reviewer and not those of this author. I do not endorse or agree with all of these reviews. Discernment is required with any and all commentaries.

Alexander, Neil, *The Epistles of John*, 1962, 173 pages. Brief critical exposition. He holds that the author is the same as of the fourth Gospel but this is John the Elder, not the Apostle (26); dates it A.D. 96 (27); maintains John opposes Gnosticism, Docetism and Cerinthianism (32);

sees parallel with John's Gospel (40); believes that John thought time was running out (63); says that John's "crudely black and white" argument repels us today (87); that we know better than John that we must associate with "false lights" (136).

Alexander, William, *The Epistles of St. John* in *The Expositor's Bible*, 1904, 325 pages. Expository notes on the major subjects in John's Epistles. He calls the Greek text "the divine original" (vii); calls Christ the "God-man" (5); holds to Johannine authorship of the Gospel, Epistles and Revelation (10); gives extensive background for the Epistles (21-38); discusses Christ the Word (80-87); teaches an unlimited atonement (106-113); argues for a general judgment (214).

Alford, Henry, *1 John* in volume 4 of *The Greek Testament*, 1875, 94 pages. Concise comments on the Greek text. He insists that the "Word of life" in 1:1 refers to the personal Lord Himself (422); holds that the material blood was a propitiatory sacrifice (428); believes that Christ's sacrifice provides universal redemption (433); thinks that antichrist is Christ's adversary (447); argues that love is the essence of God, not just an attribute (p.489); gives an extended discussion of the text of 5:7 (503-505).

Barker, Charles Joseph, *The Johannine Epistles*, 1948, 116 pages. Brief commentary based on the Revised Version. He holds that the author is the same as that of John's Gospel but the author is John the Elder (6,14); carefully defines propitiation (31-32); often discusses the meaning of Greek words; thinks that John is unnecessarily harsh and hard toward his opponents: in his zeal for truth he may have lost sight of the more "urgent claims of brotherly charity" (63).

% Overly critical of the writer and lacking in practical value.

! Barnes, Peter, *The Epistles of John*, 1998. Full of interesting quotes and the like, but it is not in any sense a responsible exegesis.

\$ Binning, Hugh, *Fellowship with God, or 28 Sermons on 1 John 1 and 2:1-3* in *Complete Works*, 1627-1653. Milk for babes and meat for men; calls to backsliders and comforts for mourners. "There is no speaking" says Durham, "after Mr. Binning; truly he had the tongue of the learned and knew how to speak a word in season."

Blaiklock, E. M., *Faith is the Victory*, 1959, 64 pages. Brief devotional and practical comments. He likes to quote Tennyson (12,14,33) and Wordsworth (19,39); stresses the fact of Christ as Son of God, a Person of the Trinity (10); stresses the finished atonement (34); attacks alcohol (44); refuses the name Christian to one who denies the deity of Christ (53).

* Translation of the epistle by the author, professor of classics in New Zealand. Not a commentary in the ordinary sense, but devotional studies of outstanding themes of the epistle, originally given at Keswick Convention.

Boice, James Montgomery, *The Epistles of John*, 1979, 226 pages. A New Evangelical commentary based on the NIV. He gives "Christian Assurance" as the main theme of 1 John (9); organizes his structure on the basis of Law's tests of truth (14ff); lists five major emphases in 1 John (19ff); holds that "walking in the light" does not refer to perfection, but the continued pursuit of holiness (38); warns against subjective experiences, tongues (92); stresses the Second Coming of Christ (96ff); argues from the present tense that believers cannot continue on in sin (109); emphasizes the full deity of Jesus Christ (145); describes how 5:7 got into the text (160ff); thinks the "elect lady" is an allegorical reference to a church (199); on compromise,

he warns "that our so-called tolerance is in reality just an indifference to truth) (205); calls the Word of God "inerrant" (212).

Braune, Karl, *The Epistles General of John*, Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, 1867, 1960, 201 pages. Conservative Lutheran exposition. He defends John's authorship (6-10); gives a date of A.D. 90 (17); interprets the "Word of Life" as the Personal Christ (22); teaches an unlimited atonement (45); has helpful comments on the triads of readers (61); has a thorough discussion of the "sin unto death" (172ff).

Brooke, Alan England, *Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, 1928, 332 pages. Critical commentary on the Greek text. He thinks in I John, Christ is "separated from us by sinlessness rather than by Divinity" (xvi); will not suggest who the author is (xviii); discusses the meaning of "propitiation" (23-27); argues from the meaning of the Greek tense; refers to the antichrist legend (59,69-79); holds that John clearly identified Jesus the man who lived a human life with the Son of God (121-122); has extended comments on the text of the "heavenly witnesses" (154-165).

% Deprecates the deity of Christ, rejects as "legend" the teaching regarding the Antichrist and minimizes the efficacy of Christ's death on the cross. Exegetically valuable; theological unreliable.

Brown, Raymond, *The Epistles of John*, Anchor Bible, volume 30, 1982, 812 pages. A somewhat useful work, although Brown, as a Jesuit, is extremely liberal and his interpretations unreliable. It is fascinating reading if you are not a Bible believing Christian. For all his scholarship, Brown never manages to hit the bulls-eye and tell us what the text actually says, which is a standard flaw in liberal commentaries. He tells us all about the text but never tells us what it actually means, nor does he make many practical applications. He does not hold to apostolic authorship and adopts all the standard liberal positions.

! A mammoth book that complements the author's two volume commentary on John. Brown has changed his position somewhat since writing his volumes on the Fourth Gospel. He is far more certain that he can delineate the history of the Johannine community (cf. his Community of the Beloved Disciple) than he used to be, and he is less certain that the writer of the Johannine Epistles (whom he does not take to be the author of the Fourth Gospel) is a faithful interpreter of the Fourth Gospel. To put the matter another way, he is far more generous with the opponents John confronts in the epistles than seems warranted by the evidence. What is distinctive (and frankly unbelievable) in his exegesis of these epistles is that everything in 1 John is understood to have specific reference to the Fourth Gospel and its (mis)interpretation by the opponents. Nevertheless, the exegetical comments are often incisive, the bibliography invaluable.

Bruce, Frederick Fyvie, *The Epistles of John*, 160 pages, 1970. A conservative and popular exposition based on the Revised Version of 1881. He defends apostolic authorship (15); gives a short introduction (25-33); holds that the words "world" and "life" are key words of John (36); stresses John's exclusive "we" (1:3, p. 38); stresses the role of Christ as Advocate (49); holds that Christ's propitiation is "sufficient" for all (50); attacks the unholy worldliness of the present day (63); discusses the Antichrist (64-68); argues that a sinful life is not the mark of God's child (90); has a note rejecting the authenticity of the passage on the three heavenly witnesses (129-130); hesitantly identifies the elect lady as a local church (143ff); thinks that Diotrephes may have provoked the monarchical bishops (152)..

! Bultmann, Rudolf, *The Epistles of John*, 1973. So brief and so concerned with improbable source criticism that its remaining exegetical comments are not worth the price.

% Burdick, Donald W., *The Epistles of John*, 1970. A careful exposition with an analysis of the ascending stages, or spiral, in John's thought. The writer sees John's basic purpose in writing as being to develop a correct view of Christ which will result in a life of love and righteousness. Good for Bible study classes.

! 1985 (different than above). Not to be overlooked although not always to be trusted. Almost 500 pages, it attempts to offer exegesis of the Greek text, theological comment, present-day application and some comment on structure. But beware: its approach to Greek somehow manages to be simultaneously painstaking and mechanical, partly because the work is linguistically uninformed. The style is a bit stodgy.

! Burge, Gary M. *The Epistles of John*, NIV Application series, 1996. Sensible, in some ways a breezy American counterpart to John Stott's Tyndale New Testament Commentary volume.

Calvin, John, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, 1551, 119 pages. Old, but helpful comments. He holds that the "Word of Life" is personal (159); continually attacks the "Papists"; excludes "the reprobate" from Christ's death for the "sins of the world" (173); teaches the immanency of Christ's Second Coming (189); holds that the "water and blood" refer to the miracle from Christ's side (257); thinks that the "sin unto death" is apostasy: "God never thus deprives his own people of the grace of the Spirit" (269).

Cameron, Robert, *The First Epistle of John*, 1899, 288 pages. Wordy meditations. He attacks Christian Science (4), Spiritualism (20), the Romanists (27,53,245), the pretribulation rapture view (265,273,274); speaks of Christ as Mediator, Intercessor and Advocate (46); shows that the believer's knowledge of God transcends the Old Testament revelation (61-62); has insight into the character of the antichrist (90); defends the existence of evil spirits (163) and the humanity and deity of Christ (167,168).

Candlish, Robert Smith, *The First Epistle of John*, 1870. 577 pages. An exhaustive exposition of surprising fervency. He holds that the "Word of life" is personal (4); gives a moving portrait of Christ the Advocate (65ff) and of the walk of Jesus (88ff); stresses that the atonement meets the needs of all mankind (75); defends the doctrines of the atonement (193) and the Virgin Birth (355); denies a sacramental interpretation of "abiding" (197-198); attacks Romanist doctrine (519); has a memorable exposition of "Having Confidence at His Coming" (204-214); refers to love within the Trinity (386-391); warns against the atmosphere produced by the "prince of the power of the air" (546-547)..

\$ We set great store by these lectures. A man hardly needs anything beyond Candlish. He is devout, candid, prudent and forcible.

* A series of 46 sermon-lectures.

! Clark, Gordon, *The Epistles of John*, 1992. He is better on these epistles than on some others, but he shapes quite a bit of his argument against Bultmann, and on these epistles I doubt if Bultmann is influential enough to be worth the trouble.

Conner, Walter Thomas, *The Epistles of John*, 1929, 151 pages. Conservative exposition by a Baptist. He defends Johannine authorship (1-2); proclaims Christ as the only begotten Son of God (9); argues from the Greek tense; attacks liberalism (34); shows the distinctions between Greek words.

Cotton, John, *An Exposition of First John*, 1657, 586 pages. Fervent Puritan exposition with an endless number of doctrines and their uses propounded from every passage. He defends all

major doctrines; Trinity (17); incarnation (19); inspiration (25); justification (49); propitiation (82ff), etc.; continually attacks the "papists"; holds that "ignorance is no mother of devotion" (41); pleads the blood of Christ (48); deprecates Calvinistic or Lutheran factions since all Christians are "members of one Christ" (72); attacks Baptist doctrine; holds that little children are saved (162); discusses antichrist with care (217).

\$ In doctrine and experience he is a noble teacher.

% So extensive that the reader can virtually develop a systematic theology from its contents.

Culpepper, R. Alan, *1 John, 2 John, 3 John*, Knox Preaching Guides, 1985, 140 pages. Brief liberal comments based on the RSV. He identifies the author as an unknown elder of a church, perhaps of Ephesus (3); thinks the "we" in I John links the author to the Beloved Disciple (8); holds that the idea of Christian warfare is "quaint" and asks "who but religious fanatics and kooks take up the word of God in battle against the devil?" (37); refers to "divisive fundamentalist movements of the present (44ff); affirms both the "divinity" and humanity of Jesus (80); denies the sacramental interpretation of water and blood (5:6, page 101); thinks the elect lady symbolizes a church (117); recommends (the Jesuit) Raymond E. Brown and C. H. Dodds as commentators on the Johannine Epistles (140).

Dodd, Charles Harold, *The Johannine Epistles*, 1946, 239 pages. Brief Neo-Orthodox comments. He holds that the author is unknown, not the son of Zebedee (xix); discusses fellowship at length (8-15); thinks John had a crude view of sin (22); argues for expiation, not propitiation on 2:2 (25); the "children, fathers, young men" of 2:12ff. are "not much more than a rhetorical figure (38); only "eccentric sects" expect the end of the world (45); prefers "realized eschatology" to the "crude mythology" of the Book of Revelation (50-51); thinks John is mistaken about the chronology of judgment (121).

* Prints the Moffatt translation but is based on independent study of the original.

! Dodd is highly praised by almost everyone but I find it difficult to see why. The quality of his prose is superb, but he is so bound to his old-fashioned liberal tradition that, on point after point, he is wildly out of sympathy with the text.

Ebrard, John H. A., *The Epistles of St. John*, 1860, 455 pages. An exhaustive, technical commentary. Although he defends the genuineness of 1 John and the Gospel (6) he thinks 2 and 3 John were added by John the Elder (xxix); often bases his arguments on Greek words; defends Christ as the Son of God (95); attacks Roman Catholic interpretations (110); denies a limited atonement (123); teaches a personal antichrist (181); makes the water and blood symbolize the power of regeneration and atonement (321).

Erdman, Charles, R., *The General Epistles*, 1918, 63 pages for John's Epistles. Brief practical and devotional comments. Defends Johannine authorship (113); proclaims the resurrection of Christ (115); holds to a personal antichrist (125); defends Christ as the eternal Word, the Son of God (126).

Fausset, A. R., *I, II, III John* in volume 6 of *A Commentary Critical, Experimental and Practical*, edited by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, 1871, 21 pages for John's Epistles. Conservative. He shows the unity of Christ and the Holy Spirit (631); observes the force of the Greek tenses; holds that the Antichrist is a personal adversary of Christ and identifies him with the "little horn", the "man of sin" and the "beast" (634); maintains that the "water and the blood" of 5:6 refer to Christ's baptism and cross (643).

Findlay, George G, *Fellowship in the Life Eternal*, 1955, 431 pages. An exhaustive exposition. He gives a clear idea of John's purpose (58); gives numerous parallels between 1 John and Revelation (78); discusses "Advocate" and "Propitiation" at length (111-130); notes distinctions in Greek tense; urges obedience and full sanctification (143); gives an Amillennial interpretation (240); defends the existence of demons (274ff); concludes with the apostolic creed (415).

Gingrich, Raymond E., *An Outline and Analysis of the First Epistle of John*, 1943, 192 pages. A published master's thesis. He defends Johannine authorship; (preface); gives a thorough outline of the epistle (17-21); often emphasizes the Greek text; distinguishes between synonyms; teaches the existence of a persona antichrist (105).

Gore, Charles, *The Epistles of St. John*, 1920, 250 pages. A popular exposition. Although he doubts the authenticity of II Peter (21) he affirms John's authorship of the Epistles (41-43); teaches baptismal regeneration (87,140), discusses "Gnostic" errors (109ff); defends the divine Sonship of Christ, His incarnation (117), His equality with the Father (179); attacks Romanism (130); takes the "water and Blood" to mean the baptism of Christ and His cross (192).

\$ Graham, W., *The Spirit of Love*, 1857. Graham is sound and vigorous and does not mince matters in dealing with semi-skeptics; hence he brings upon himself violent reviews from opponents.

! Grayston, Kenneth, *The Epistles of John* in New Century Bible, 1984. Too brief to be a first choice, but is of some value because of his provocative positions (e.g., Grayston thinks the Johannine Epistles were written before the Fourth Gospel).

\$ Handcock, W. J., *Exposition of 1 John*, 1861. The author has carefully studied the original and has his own ideas as to its meaning; but either he has not the power of communicating them, or else we are slow of apprehension. Very frequently we are at a loss to know what he means.

* Haupt, Erich, *The First Epistle of St. John. A Contribution to Biblical Theology*, 1893. Greek text. While giving careful attention to the grammatical and linguistic side, the emphasis is upon the doctrinal elaboration of the epistle. Valuable for the fuller teaching of 1 John.

Hendricks, William L., *The Letters of John*, 1970, 156 pages. Designed as a textbook for the Southern Baptist New Church Study Course. He holds that the five Johannine works were based on the thought of the apostle John (6); thinks the elect lady is a church (21); regularly refers to C. H. Dodd; warns against pietism (89); stresses that Christ did not become the "only begotten" at His incarnation (101); explains the background of 5:7 very clearly (117).

Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John, An Expositional Commentary*, 1991. Both exegetical and expositional, but as with most exegetical commentaries, Hiebert leans more toward the critical texts, although he does not attack the Received Text nearly as much as other commentators do. Hiebert is generally useful, even if he is occasionally wordy and even a bit dull as he offers only "standard" and "accepted" interpretations.. He seems to be the favorite commentator of the Bible department at Bob Jones University.

The best modern exposition, written in full knowledge of the Greek text and commentary literature. He defends Johannine authorship (3-16,281); explains the textual problems of 1 John 5:7 (26ff); provides a careful outline (29-34); stresses the sacrificial nature of propitiation (75); teaches a premillennial interpretation of antichrist (109ff); urges the immanency of Christ's return (137); stresses the two classes of humanity: those in Christ and those

practicing sin (143ff); warns against false teachers and the occult (180); argues that the elect lady refers to an actual lady and her children (282).

Houlden, James Leslie, *A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, 1973, 164 pages. A liberal commentary based on the author's own translation. He has no idea who the author is but does not think he is the author of John's gospel (2,19,38); regards I John as a puzzling work (22); sees parallels between I John and the Dead Sea Scrolls (33); thinks that I John begins crudely (45); does not think the author of I John referred to Jesus in the phrase "word of life" (51ff); holds that "the Evil One" is a Johannine term for the devil (72); thinks that I John teaches the inferiority of the Son to the Father (115); calls the text of I John "obscure and imprecise" (118); advocates interpreting water and blood as baptism and the eucharist (128ff); thinks that the elect lady symbolizes a church (142).

% Ironside, Henry Allan, *Addresses on the Epistles of John and an Exposition on the Epistle of Jude*. One of Ironside's best works. Plain and practical, clear and concise.

! Johnson, Thomas Floyd, *The Epistles of John in New International Bible Commentary*, 1995. Not of first rank.

Kelly, William, *An Exposition of the Epistles of John the Apostle*, 1905, 434 pages. Wordy lectures. Defends the deity of Christ (2), the divine inspiration of the Bible (278); attacks Pelagians (35), liberals in churches (101), the documentary hypothesis (115), modern deism (145), flowers at funerals (195), the Oxford Movement: "popery without a pope" (265) and even reproaches Matthew Henry (288); calls Calvinism "shallow, hard and wrong" (64); attempts to harmonize Arminian and Calvinistic doctrine (66) but speaks slightly of both views (234-235).

% Lectures by a Plymouth Brethren.

King, Guy H, *The Fellowship*, 1954, 127 pages. Devotional. He holds that the "Word of Life" is personal (15); has a helpful description of the nature of sin (21); calls Christ a "heavenly Pethahiah" (29-30); speaks against Christian Scientists, Spiritualists, etc (55); recommends Keswick Movement (61,103); stresses the present tenses in Greek (71-72); thinks that Moses, Achan and Ananias sinned unto death (119-120).

! Kruse, Colin, *The Epistles of John*, 2000. Very accessible and independent. It works happily out of primary sources and does not get bogged down in too many details (although the author is clearly aware of them).

! Kysar, Robert, *The Epistles of John in Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament*, 1986. Workmanlike and competent, but not full.

Lange, John Peter, *1 John in Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 1867, 179 pages. Conservative Lutheran exposition. Defends John's authorship (6-10); gives a date of 90 (17); teaches an unlimited atonement (45).

% Law, Robert, *The Tests of Life. A Study of the First Epistle of St. John*, 1968. This unique contribution covers a major portion of 1 John, provides timely discussion on theological and Christological themes, and includes the doctrine of sin, the account of propitiation and the tests of righteousness, love and belief.

Not a verse-by-verse commentary but a study of major topics in 1 John. He centers most of his thoughts on three great tests- of righteousness, of love and of belief- found in 1 John, but he also discusses the doctrines of Christ, sin, propitiation, eternal life, etc. He stresses

that Jesus is "God's Only-Begotten Son" (73), the eternal Son (100); defends the doctrine of the Trinity (78-80) but admits that the full doctrine may not be found in 1 John (98); thinks that John teaches the impeccability of the righteous man and that this is puzzling rather than instructive (70).

Lenski, Richard Charles Henry, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude*, 1945, 187 pages. A thorough Lutheran interpretation. Defends John's authorship (363); has an interesting diagram of the structure of 1 John (367); insists on the personal meaning of the "Word of Life" in 1:1 (372); holds that the "blood" denotes sacrifice as "the death" would not (389); advocates a universal atonement (400); attacks Russell, Eddy, modernism, etc. (432) as well as perfectionism (458); often stresses Greek tense.

Lewis, Greville P., *The Johannine Epistles*, 1961, 150 pages. Brief liberal notes. He holds that the author was a disciple of John the apostle (1); thinks that it is "impossible to discover a clear scheme of thought" in 1 John (6); often refers to Wesley; defends the translation "expiation" in 2:2 (33); speaks very seriously about the reality of the devil (56-58); dates Daniel 167 B.C. (67); defends the incarnation (69).

Lias, John James, *The First Epistle of St. John*, 1887, 424 pages. Conservative. Defends the genuineness of the Epistle (1-7); holds that the antichrist is yet future (129); attacks Roman Catholic interpretations (149) and the papacy (293-294); takes literally the idea that one born of God cannot sin (236-241); gives nine interpretations of 3:20 (276); thinks that the "water and the blood" refer to the two sacraments (369).

Lincoln, William, *The Epistles of John*, n.d., 192 pages. A Brethren exposition. He makes the Epistle begin where the Gospel ended (11); stresses the blood of Christ (20), eternal security (23); Christ as Advocate (32-34); deprecates partisan denominationalism (44); holds to the three-fold nature of man (57); draws meaning from the Greek; holds that Christ could not sin (93); holds that the "sin unto death" is bodily death (158); gives the Premillennial view (184).

! Loader, William R., *The Epistles of John*, 1992. Brief and innocuous.

Love, Julian Price, *The First, Second and Third Letters of John, the Letter of Jude, the Revelation to John* in volume 25 the Layman's Bible Commentary, 1960, 25 pages. Extremely brief liberal comments for liberal laymen. He does not decide on who the author of I John is (12); attacks the idea of propitiation (16); doubts that "young men" and "fathers" refer to special groups (18); removes eschatological sense from "the last hour" (19), covers II John in two pages!

! Marshall, I. Howard, *The Epistles of John* in The New International Commentary, 1995. Simply written and ably brings together a good deal of previous scholarship without getting bogged down in minutiae. This is a very good commentary.

\$ Morgan, James and Samuel Cox, *The Epistles of John*, 1865. Dr. Candlish says that this is a work "of great practical interest and value" and that had it appeared at an earlier date "he might have abstained from issuing" his own Lectures on this Epistle. We are glad to possess both works.

A loving exposition in the Puritan manner. Morgan on I John urges both the deity and humanity of Christ (2ff); stresses the compassionate nature of the Father (22ff); holds that Christ's deity gives efficacy to His blood (46); refers to redeemed infants (93); urges fighting the

devil with the sword of the Spirit (98ff). Cox on II and III John holds that the elect lady is a personal friend of John (67-69); calls Diotrephes a "prating lover of preeminence" (113).

\$ Neander, J. A. W., *First Epistle of John Explained*, 1852. Mrs. Conany, the translator of this work, says in her preface: "The treasures of genius and learning which enrich his more scientific works, here seem vivified by a new element, and melt, under the fervor of his inner spiritual life, into a glowing stream of eloquent practical instruction."

Phillips, John, *Exploring the Epistles of John*, 2003, 233 pages. Covering all three epistles. Phillips is always good in his expositions. His expository outlines are worth the price of his books. Premillennial, dispensational, conservative and based on the King James Version.

\$ Pierce, Samuel Eyles, *Exposition of 1 John in 93 Sermons*, 1835. This devout author was highly Calvinistic, but withal full of spiritual power and unction. He loved the deep things of God and wrote upon them in a gracious manner.

Plummer, Alfred, *The Epistles of St. John*, Cambridge Greek Testament, 1894, 302 pages. Critical notes on the Greek text. Defends Johannine authorship (xi-xiii); lists 37 parallels between John and Paul (Ixiv) defends the divine and human natures of Christ (15); stresses His sinlessness (28); often defines exactly the meaning of Greek words. In 5:6 he takes "through water and blood" to mean the baptism and death of Christ (113-114). Also has a commentary in the Pulpit Commentary which is distinct from this.

! Rensberger, David K., *The Epistles of John in Abingdon New Testament Commentary*, 1997. He writes well. On many fronts he is a popularizer of Raymond Brown's opinions.

Roberts, J. W., *The Letters of John*, 1968, 182 pages. Based on the Revised Standard Version. Defends Johannine authorship (13); reasons from the Greek text; attacks the translation "only begotten" in 4:9 yet defends the deity of Christ (113-115); is indebted to Dale Moody for some of his ideas (115).

Ross, Alexander, *The Epistles of James and John*, 1954, 144 pages. A very helpful, practical exposition. He refutes C. H. Dodd's opinions on 1 John (110); defends Johannine authorship (107-113); attacks the idea of another "John the Elder" (125-129); defends the meaning of "propitiation" in 2:2 (151) and the idea of a personal antichrist (169-170); argues from the present tense in the Greek (183); attacks cults (197); holds that "water and blood" refer to Christ's baptism and death (213).

Ruckman, Peter, *The Bible Believer's Commentary on the General Epistles, volume 2: 1,2,3 John and Jude*, 2004, 317 pages. As with all of Ruckman's commentaries, this one is practical and generally orthodox, although his unique interpretations will arise occasionally. Ruckman wastes too much space attacking other writers (mainly those who do not hold to the King James Version) and it gets distracting. Premillennial, dispensational and based on the King James Version. Ruckman places the epistles of John into the tribulation period dispensationally and doctrinally, as he does with the other "General" Epistles. Good practical applications.

! Schnackenburg, Rudolf, *The Epistles of John*, 1992. A commentary by a moderately conservative Catholic scholar of the first rank. The reasoning is consistently exegetical, historical and theological.

! Smalley, Stephen, *The Epistles of John*, Word Biblical Commentary, 1984. The bibliography is as good as Brown's, and Smalley is at his best when summarizing and interacting with the positions of others. The work is a little more conservative than that of Brown (though I do not find Smalley's reconstruction of the setting very believable, with some opponents denying that Jesus is truly God and others denying that he is truly human). The comments themselves are not as incisive as Brown's.

! Smith, D. Moody, *The Epistles of John*, 1991. Too brief to belong to the first rank, but everywhere the positions adopted are carefully negotiated.

Smith, David, *1 John* in volume 5 of the Expositor's Greek Testament, 1907, 50 pages. Greek text. Defends John's authorship, unity with the Gospel (151-158); interprets "Word of life" as personal (170); has a helpful explanation of "Advocate" (173); attacks Roman Catholic doctrine (174); often emphasizes the Greek case and verb tense; thinks that all men are the children of God (177); frequently quotes Latin without translation (180); defends the incarnation (191); identifies the "sin unto death" with the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (198).

Stock, John, *Exposition of 1 John*, 1865. Written by a well-instructed man of God. For spiritual teaching the work is second to none. Dr. Candlish prized it highly.

Stott, John Robert W., *The Epistles of John*, in Tyndale New Testament Commentary, 1964, 1988 revision, 230 pages. Helpful, practical exposition. Carefully defends Johannine authorship (13-41); attacks "demythologizing"; stresses that Christ is both God and man (61); observes tenses of verbs; defends propitiation (82); teaches perseverance (105), the second coming (116); attacks the universal fatherhood of God (128); holds to the reality of the devil (136).

@ Here is a clear and stimulating treatment by a gifted writer who has served as rector of the All Souls (Anglican) Church, London. Several New Testament scholars have hailed the commentary as outstanding in exegesis, exposition, and warm application. This 1988 edition updates the 1964 work. Stott displays a vast breadth of reading in the best conservative commentaries on the Johannine epistles.

% Strauss, Lehman, *The Epistles of John*, 1962. A slender volume containing alliterated messages covering almost all the text. Contains useable illustrations and abounds in appropriate application.

A series of topical studies in I John, a strict exposition of II and III John. He lists parallels between the Epistles and the Gospel of John (13); holds that the author is John the Apostle (13); attacks the universal fatherhood of God (21); warns against the seducing spirits (66); teaches the reality of a personal devil (98-99); the certainty of the Second Coming of Christ (131).

! Strecker, Georg, *The Epistles of John*, 1996. Technically stimulating, but not as useful as Schnackenburg for the student and preacher. Astonishingly, Strecker locates the Sitz im Leben in the middle of the second century, putting him at odds with the standard dating of two crucial papyri. Many of Strecker's positions reflect an updating of old-fashioned history-of-religions positions. The center of these epistles is not Christology or faith or love, but polemics, and Strecker's own interest lies primarily in the delineation of historical-theological "tendencies". Having said that, the detailed exegesis, the rich footnotes, and the nineteen excursuses provide a cornucopia of learning for the scholar and well-equipped pastor. Others will skip it.

! Talbert, Charles H., *The Epistles of John*, 1992. Too slender to be very significant.

@ Thompson, Marianne M. *1-3 John*, 1992. 168 pages. This is a lucid work in the relatively new InterVarsity New Testament Commentary Series, based on the NIV. This writer, Associate Professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, earned her Ph.D. from Duke. The book is readable for popular, general use and perceptively helpful at times. It is frustratingly incomplete at other points, bypassing differing viewpoints or solid supports or not commenting sufficiently on a subject before going on. A mist of vagueness descends in some cases. The writer is not clear on why she doubts that those who have seceded from the Christians (1 John 2:19) are Gnostic. She lists about a half dozen similarities between Gnostic belief and the secessionists of 1 John, and feels that Johannine elements are not as fully developed or entirely congruent with later Gnostic writers. Yet she does not nail down what she means (17-18). She is not sure who wrote the epistles, whether the apostle John or another John. She could have built a better case for the apostle. Seven themes mark the epistles: God's character, the centrality of Jesus Christ, Christian discipleship, love/unity/fellowship, preserving sound teaching, discernment, and assurance/confidence (21-25). Yet she does not point to an overall theme or statement to unify the seven. The writer sees a contrast between a characteristic pattern of life of genuine believers and of those lacking genuineness, the secessionists. Those who are genuine walk in the light, abide, acknowledge their sin, show love, and follow the truth; the others do not. References to those not loving, believing, and keeping commands are to the secessionists (26). Yet exhortations to love and obey are relevant to the saved, for each of them, though walking imperfectly, needs to "bring all of . . . life under the scrutiny of God's light, and to live in conformity with God's character and will" in an increasing way (26). False claims of 1:6,8,10 are by the secessionists (44). A contrast in 3:4-10 is between those with eternal life (children of God) and those without this life (children of the devil).

Many times the commentator's generalizing leaves the impression that the saved one must live an ideally perfect walk in the light (cf. 43). Yet at many other points she is clear that Christians do sin (45): "Those in the light do indeed sin but they recognize the need to be purified from sin" and "We are not perfect light as God is." "The shape of the Christian life as a whole" not perfect obedience fulfills the Christian response to God's Word (53). She needs to explain more of how a Christian can be in fellowship with God walking in the light, reflecting God's character, doing the truth, living as God desires (46-47) when, before confession and cleansing, he has fallen into sin and is impure. Is he always in fellowship, or in and out at different times, with the dominant pattern being one of victory? The commentary does have a healthy clarity that true grace, distinguished from cheap grace (cf. 51), leads Christians to confess and seek forgiveness and obedience to God's will (51). The writer recognizes obedience as a basis for assurance, as mentioned in 1 John 2:3 (51), but does not integrate this with other grounds for assurance. Some ideas are catchy but misleading, as "we are not given directions, but direction" (54). Within God's overall direction are many directions or specific ways to live by grace according to His character. Obeying specifics such as following a check-list, as God enables, need not amount to legalism. She very helpfully clarifies that keeping God's commands (aren't these specifics?) as in 1:7 "is not the condition, but rather the characteristic of the knowledge of God" (54). The commentary is ambiguous in explaining the named age-groups in 2:12-14. The discussion vacillates and creates uncertainty as to what is meant. It does not settle upon a view solidly. She links Christ's second coming with final judgment as in amillennial reasoning (72), yet the brevity leaves one unsure. The work sees the shame of unbelievers at the future judgment in 2:28, contrasting this with the confidence believers (those who abide) will have. Comments bring in the very close connection in v. 29 with the one who is born again and whose pattern of life is to do what is right. "Righteous conduct does not make us God's children. Rather, such conduct is the consequence or expression of a relationship that already exists." The practice comes from the reborn nature (87), as God "created us and re-created us in his own image" (90), giving us the family likeness as His children (cf. 3:1-10). Problem verses often get only a cursory discussion, without other viewpoints or much, if any,

evidence. In regard to not sinning in 3:6, 9, she sees the present tense as denoting the identifying characteristic of a person genuinely born of God (95). The authoress skirts the issue of "God's seed remains" (3:9), leaving it without explanation. Without supporting it, she mentions possible identification as the Holy Spirit or the Word of God, but settles for the generalization that the seed is "that which makes them his children" (97). What, then, is it? And in 2 John 8, she takes the warning not to "lose what you have worked for" as reflecting on what happens to professing but not really saved people. They lose eternal life, which they worked for in the sense of what is actually the work of God in John 6:29 that people believe in the one whom God has sent. She fails to explain how past belief, if it had a beginning and now can be continued, was not real while it was there, or how one can lose eternal life when this implies that he once had that life. She does not mention Stott's view that the reference is to the truly saved losing special reward. Satisfaction with half explanations here and frequently elsewhere makes the work bothersome. This is unfortunate since in many places the commentary has benefit for those readers seeking help from a lighter commentary.

Torrey, R. A., *Outline Studies on I John*, 1963, 84 pages. Previously unpublished expository sermons. He finds 7 different ideas in each chapter; stresses the certainty of the believer's knowledge (12), the wonderful character of Jesus (24ff), the believer's boldness before God (47ff); the believer's security (81-82).

Van Ryn, August, *The Epistles of John*, 1948, 181 pages. Practical and devotional. Uses the American Standard Version. Defends the human and divine natures of Christ (23); cites parallels in John's Gospel; warns against losing rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ (79); stresses Christ's sinlessness (95) and abiding in Him (136).

Vaughan, Curtis, *1,2,3 John: A Study Guide*, 1970, 139 pages. A brief New Evangelical commentary. He thinks that the chief value of 2 and 3 John is that they furnish insights into the historical setting of I John (12); stresses the continuous and progressive nature of the cleansing from sin (33); contrasts the views of Dodd and Morris on propitiation (38); identifies the "man of sin" with the "antichrist" (62); emphasizes the divine preexistence of Christ (94); holds that "God is love" means that love is an "integral part of His very essence" (104); explains why 5:7 is not genuine (121); concludes with a bibliography (137-139).

Vine, William Edwy, *The Epistles of John*, n.d., 128 pages. Strongly conservative. He believes John is defending believers against the Ebionites, Docetists and Cerinthians (7); maintains Christ's eternal preexistence (10); observes the force of the Greek tenses; often distinguishes between Greek words; gives Premillennial interpretation (43,51).

Watson, Charles, *First Epistle General of St. John*, 1891, 534 pages. Popular and devotional lectures. He holds that "Word of life" is personal (3); urges that sin be forsaken (39), that believers abide in Christ (169); defends the divine and human natures of Christ (80, 113); foretells the end of the British Empire (91); stresses many antichrists rather than one (97); shows the inequality of men (178) sees the unselfishness of god in the deity of Christ (300-301).

Westcott, Brooke Foss, *The Epistles of St. John*, 1883, 436 pages. The best, most thorough commentary on the Greek text. Defends John's authorship (xxx); holds that the "word of life" refers to the revelation, not the Person (4); has exhaustive comments on 5:7 (202-209).

White, Reginald Ernest Oscar, *Open Letter to Evangelicals*, 1964, 276 pages. New Evangelical comments. All that White will admit about authorship is he is "possibly an eyewitness of Christ", used "Johannine terms" (15); holds to the meaning of "expiation" rather

than "propitiation" on 2:2 (43); explains Gnostic errors (82-83); claims that believer's authority is not in the words of Scripture but in Christ (155-156); is deeply indebted to C. H. Dodd and William Law.

% Helpful for its illustrations; disappointing because of its weak theology.

Wilder, Amos N. and Paul W. Hoon, *The First, Second and Third Epistles of John* in volume 12 of *The Interpreter's Bible*, 1957, 107 pages. A hard-line interpretation. They hold that the author is an "unknown elder" (215); prove the reality of sin by great literature (223); make "propitiation" to mean "expiation" (228); make the antichrist a symbol (244); think that passing from death to life is "hyperbolic language" (263); imply that only the first century could believe in evil spirits (272).

William, Ronald Ralph, *The Letters of John and James*, 1965, 72 pages. Brief comments based on the New English Bible. He sees no difference between the Greek present and aorist tenses (25); thinks that John forgot to cross out some words (26); thinks that even if John believed in a devil, it does not settled whether modern man believes in one (37); holds that the Bible contains half-truths (39) and overstatements (42); admits that the NEB changes the meaning (45,60) and is a paraphrase (48).

Introduction to 1 John

Authorship

Anonymous, but well accepted that it is the Apostle John, who also wrote the Fourth Gospel, 2 John, 3 John and Revelation. If John the Apostle was the author, then he could write an anonymous epistle but it would still be general knowledge that he wrote it, since he would be so well known, so a personal identification of authorship would not be necessary.

Marcion rejected 1 John from his canon not because he did not believe it to be inspired or of apostolic authorship, but because the contents of the epistle did not fit into his unorthodox theology.

Other early church figures who rejected apostolic authorship include Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius, Ambrose and Jerome.

Its closeness to the vocabulary and thought of the Fourth Gospel reveal that both books must have been written by the same man.

"John the Elder". Those who reject apostolic authorship by John, the son of Zebedee, create this gentleman as the probable author of 1 John and other books that bear the name of John. The Elder is thought to have been the pastor of the church at Ephesus. This theory rests largely upon a passage from Papias in which he seems to distinguish two Johns, the Apostle and the Presbyter. But Papias' quote could also be interpreted as to refer to one man.

Date of Writing

This epistle is probably written about the same time as John's gospel, so we will place it between 80-95. Since there is no mention of Roman persecution, it could have been written either before or after the reign of Domitian.

Occasion for Writing

The epistle was apparently written to compete with various errors, particularly Gnosticism. False teachers of this cult had denied the essential truth of the incarnation, that Christ had come in the flesh, maintaining that matter was evil. John also combated false mysticism that denied the reality of the sin nature in the Christian. He also railed against those who violated Christian fellowship and rejected Christian morality and love.

Purpose of Writing

John plainly refutes the false ideas of the Gnostics. He does this positively, giving fresh interpretation and application of the gospel to the urgent demands of his time. He shows the reality of the fellowship with the Father and that believers possess eternal life now in this world. He stresses the close connection of the possession of eternal life with the manifestation of love, right conduct, and sound morality. John apparently does not develop this thought in progressive fashion but in what has been called a "spiral" manner, treating a number of related topics and interweaving them. For this reason outlining the epistle is difficult.

Antinomianism ("without law") is also in view here, the teaching that Christians are not obligated to the Law or any moral law.

Docetism is also attacked by John. This is the teaching that a true incarnation is unthinkable. The Divine could not enter into an actual union with flesh. Thus, the human nature of Christ and the incidents of His earthly life and ministry are basically an illusion. Docetism became more fully developed as an important doctrinal position of Gnosticism, a religious dualist system of belief arising in the 2nd century AD which held that matter was evil and the spirit good and claimed that salvation was attained only through esoteric knowledge, or gnosis. The heresy developed from speculations about the imperfection or essential impurity of matter. More thoroughgoing Docetists asserted that Christ was born without any participation of matter and that all the acts and sufferings of his life, including the Crucifixion, were mere appearances. They consequently denied Christ's Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. Milder Docetists attributed to Christ an ethereal and heavenly body but disagreed on the degree to which it shared the real actions and sufferings of Christ.

Audience

We do not know to whom John wrote although it appears to be Gentile, due to an absence of direct Old Testament quotations and warnings against idolatry.

Place Written From

Unknown. Tradition places John as the pastor of the church at Ephesus in his later years, so Ephesus is the best candidate. Ephesus would be a good candidate since it was the intellectual center of Asia Minor and would be an important city for such a church to be planted. Paul had prophesied earlier in Acts 20:28-31 that false teachers would arise in this church and that came true in John's day with the advent of the Gnostics in Ephesus and in Asia Minor.

There are no geographic references in the epistle that help us to identify an audience or a source of the epistle.

Style

John's Greek is straightforward and simple, with a very consistent grammatical construction. It makes a fine study to the beginning student of Greek. The same can also be said for 2 and 3 John.

Structure

1 John is almost impossible to outline, so we will not attempt it in this study, as we have in our other ones. Augustine and Calvin both noted this with Calvin saying that there was no continuous order in 1 John. John's thought moves in cycles rather than straight forward. Richard Lenski said "John rises above formal divisions and parts. The letter is built like an inverted pyramid or cone. First the basic apex is laid down in 1:1-4; then the upward broadening begins. Starting with 1:5-10 the base rises and expands, and so continues in ever widening circles, as one new pertinent thought joins the preceding...The line of thought simply spirals in rising

widening circles until all is complete (quoted in *An Introduction to the Non-Pauline Epistles* by D. Edmond Hiebert, page 215)."

Parallels Between the First Epistle and the Gospel

EPISTLE		GOSPEL
1:1	The Word	1:1
1:2	Christ manifested	1:14
1:4	Full Joy	15:11
1:5	Light	1:7-9
2:5	Keeping God's Word	14:23
2:6,28	Abiding in Christ	15:4,7
2:8a	New Commandment	13:34a
2:8b	Light in Darkness	1:5
2:10	No stumbling in light	11:10
2:13	Knowing God	17:3
3:1	Sons of God	1:12
3:2	Seeing Christ	17:24
3:8	Satan's works	8:44
3:11	Love one another	13:34b
3:13	World hatred	17:14
4:9	Only begotten son sent	3:16
4:12	God not seen	1:18
5:1	Born of God	1:13
5:12	Hath the Son	3:36
5:13	These things written	20:31
5:14	Ask anything	14:13,14
5:20	The true God	17:2,3

Names and Titles of Christ

1. Word of Life 1:1; 5:7	8. Jesus 2:22
2. Eternal Life 1:2; 5:20	9. Christ 2:22; 5:1
3. Son 1:3; 2:22	10. Son of God 3:8
4. Jesus Christ 1:3; 4:2	11. Only-begotten Son 4:9
5. Advocate 2:1	12. Saviour 4:14
6. The Righteous 2:1	13. True God 5:20
7. Propitiation for sin 2:2; 4:10	

Names and Titles for God

1. Father 1:2; 5:7	3. Love 4:8,16
2. Light 1:5	

Names and Titles of the Holy Spirit

1. Holy One 2:20	3. Spirit of God 4:2
2. The Spirit 3:24	4. Holy Ghost 5:7

Old Testament References in 1 John

1. Sin cannot be denied, 1:8 with 1 Kings 8:46 and Ecclesiastes 7:20
2. Forgiveness and pardon, 1:9 with Isaiah 55:7
3. Christ's finished work, 3:5 with Isaiah 53
4. Cain's murder of Abel, 3:12 with Genesis 3:8

Other Observations

First John is the book in the New Testament that deals the most with the doctrines and practices of the Christian life.

It also deals with the fundamental doctrines of the faith, with the basics of Christianity. For example, John deals with happiness (1:4), holiness (2:1) and security (5:13).

The letter is very pastoral in tone. We do not know if John was pastoring in Ephesus but as an apostle, he had a pastoral ministry. Thus 1 John is both pastoral and polemic.

John presents truth in black-or-white terms. He does not see gray. He is rigid, dogmatic and absolute, giving no compromise to anyone. This dogmatism makes 1 John a very difficult book to preach through because it is liable to tear up the preacher. When I first tried in 1989, I had to stop because John was literally tearing me to shreds!

There are several sets of "seven things" found in 1 John (H. T. Spence, *The Canon of Scripture*, page 206):

1. Seven contrasts:

1. 1:5-2:11 The light verses the darkness
2. 2:12-17 The Father verses the world
3. 2:18-28 Christ verses the antichrist
4. 2:29-3:24 Good works verses evil works
5. 4:1-6 The Holy Spirit verses error
6. 4:7-21 Love verses pious pretence
7. 5:1-21 The God-born verses others

2. Seven distinguishing traits of the born again believer

1. 2:29 He doeth righteousness
2. 3:9 He is not given to sinning
3. 4:7 He will love the true brethren and will know God
4. 5:1 He will continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ
5. 5:1 He loves God and is begotten of God
6. 5:4 He overcomes the world
7. 5:18 The Devil cannot touch him

3. Seven reasons why this epistle was written

1. 1:3 That we may have fellowship together
2. 1:4 That our joy may be full
3. 2:1 That we sin not
4. 2:13-17 That we overcome and love not the world
5. 2:21-24 Because ye know the truth
6. 2:26 Because there are those that seduce you
7. 5:13 That ye may know ye have eternal life

4. Seven tests of Christian genuineness

1. 1:6 We must not walk in darkness
2. 1:8 We must not say we have no sin to be cleansed from
3. 1:10 We must not say that we have not sinned
4. 2:4 We must keep his commandments
5. 2:6 If we say we abide in Him, then we must walk as He walked
6. 2:9 We cannot be in the light and hate our brother
7. 4:20 We cannot hate our brother and love God

Gnosticism

Since 1 John is taken up with a polemic against Gnostic thought, we offer the following essay on Gnosticism as a background to the thought and teaching that John so vigorously opposed.

Gnosticism was a complex philosophical and religious movement prominent in the Greco-Roman world in the 2nd century AD. While Gnosticism drew from and influenced in turn many traditional religions, its effect was most clearly felt on nascent Christianity, in which it led to the formation of the canon, creed, and episcopal organization.

The designation Gnosticism, derived from the Greek *gnostikos* (one who has gnosis, or "secret knowledge"), is a term of modern scholarship. A modern expression of Gnosticism would be the various forms and expressions of freemasonry, which deals with "secret knowledge".

Evidence for the Gnostic phenomenon, found in the Church Fathers who opposed Gnostic teachings (Irenaeus, c. 185; Hippolytus, c. 230; Epiphanius, c. 375) and in the Gnostic writings themselves, reveals a diversity in theology, ethics, and ritual that defies strict classification. Yet Gnostic sects appear to have shared an emphasis on the redemptive power of esoteric knowledge, acquired not by learning or empirical observation but by divine revelation.

The origins of the Gnostic world view have been sought by scholars in the dualism of Iranian religion, the allegorical Idealism of the Middle Platonic philosophers, and the apocalypticism of certain Jewish mystics. There are analogies also with Egyptian and Mesopotamian thought. It was only with the rise of Christianity, however, that Gnostic syncretism came to full expression.

In the Gnostic view, the unconscious self of man is consubstantial with the Godhead, but because of a tragic fall it is thrown into a world that is completely alien to its real being. Through revelation from above, man becomes conscious of his origin, essence, and transcendent destiny. Gnostic revelation is to be distinguished both from philosophical enlightenment, because it cannot be acquired by the forces of reason, and from Christian revelation, because it is not rooted in history and transmitted by Scripture. It is rather the intuition of the mystery of the self.

The world, produced from evil matter and possessed by evil demons, cannot be a creation of a good God; it is mostly conceived of as an illusion, or an abortion, dominated by Yahweh, whose creation and history are depreciated. This world is therefore alien to God, who is for the Gnostics depth and silence, beyond any name or predicate, the absolute, the source of good spirits who together form the *pleroma*, or realm of light.

The development of Christian doctrine was to a large extent a reaction against Gnosticism. The formulation of creedal symbols, the canonization of the New Testament Scriptures, and the emphasis on episcopal authority all were made necessary by the Gnostics' claims. Moreover, in some measure the Gnostics were the first theologians, and their systems prompted the systemization of early Christian thought. In addition, they kept alive the great issues of freedom, redemption, and grace, which for a time lost their emphasis among Christian writers. In a later period, the theology of Augustine owed a great deal to his early experience as a Manichaean.

The Gnostic teaching that matter was evil and that only spirit was good led to the idea that the physical body should be treated harshly, a form of asceticism, or that sin committed in the body would have no effect on the spirit. This last teaching has even crept into Jack Hyles/hyper-evangelism wing of Fundamentalism in that they teach that as long as one is spiritual in "winning souls" that their own personal sins would have no direct effect upon them spiritually. This is why we have so many adulterers and thieves who go "soulwinning" and are lauded as great "soulwinners", despite the fact that their personal life is in shambles due to sin.

Five reasons why John wrote First John:

- 1. 1:3 — “That ye also may have fellowship with us [other believers]; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”
- 2. 1:4 — “That your joy may be full.”
- 3. 2:1 — “That ye sin not.”
- 4. 5:13 — “That ye may know that ye have eternal life.”
- 5. 5:13 — “That ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

From W. Graham Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, 3:337-338

I. The Christian’s Advance in the Light Divine 1:1-2:27

Introduction 1:1-4

1. Conditions of Walking in the Light 1:5-2:11	2. Hindrances to Walking in the Light 2:12-27
A. Practical Holiness Selfward 1:5-2:2	A. The Ground of Appeal 2:12-14
B. Complete Obedience Godward 2:3-6	B. The Evils That Threaten 2:15-23
C. Brotherly Love Manward 2:7-11	C. The Secret of Safety 2:24-27

II. The Christian’s Attitude Toward the Light Divine 2:28-4:21

1. The Evils Which Negate Love 2:28-4:6	2. The Love Which Negates Evil 4:7-21
A. Sin Opposing Righteousness 2:28-3:10a	A. The Revelation of Love 4:7-10
B. Hate Opposing Love 3:10b-24	B. The Inspiration of Love 4:11-16a
C. Error Opposing Truth 4:1-6	C. The Consumation of Love 4:16b-21

III. The Christian’s Affinity with the Life Divine 5:1-20

1. The Possession of Eternal Life 5:1-12	2. The Confidence of Eternal Life 5:13-17
A. The Bond of Possession Faith 5:1-5	A. In the Boldness of Our Spiritual Action 5:13-17
B. The Proof of Possession Witness 5:6-12	B. In the Certainty of our Spiritual Knowledge 5:18-20

From J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, 6:323:

Seven Contrasts in 1 John

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

Seven Distinguishing Traits of the Born-Again (ibid, 6:327-328) 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1 (twice); 5:4,18

Seven Reasons Why This Epistle Was Written 1:3,4; 2:1, 13-17, 21-24, 26; 5:13

Seven Tests of Christian Genuineness 1:6,8,10; 2:4,6,9; 4:20

Seven Tests of Honesty and Reality

- 1:6- False Fellowship
- 1:8- False Sanctity
- 1:10- False Righteousness
- 2:4- False Allegiance
- 2:6- False Behavior
- 2:9- False Spirituality
- 4:20- False Love to God

Use of the perfect Greek tense verb in 1 John

The perfect Greek tense verb is used 58 times in 40 verses in 1 John. The perfect tense has the idea of the progress of an action that has been completed and the results of the action are continuing on, in full effect. The progress of the action has reached its culmination and the finished results are now in existence. Unlike the English perfect, which indicates a completed past action, the Greek perfect tense indicates the continuation and present state of a completed past action. It indicates the event has been completed and is finished and no more can be added or done to that action. Since John is the Apostle of Certainty, especially in matters of faith in Christ, we would expect John to talk much in the perfect tense, such as “we know” (absolutely, in the perfect tense).

The usages of the perfect tense in 1 John are as follows:

1:1 (three times); 2, 3 (twice),5

2:3,5,11,12,13 (three times), 14 (twice), 20,21,29

3:1,2,6,9 (twice), 14 (twice), 15,16

4:2,3 (twice), 4,7,9,12 (twice), 13,14 (twice), 16 (twice), 17,18,20

5:1 (twice), 4, 10 (twice), 13, 15 (three times), 18 (twice), 19, 20 (twice)

THE DISPENSATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

The Epistles of John, along with Hebrews, James, the epistles of Peter and Jude are known as “General” or “Catholic” Epistles. While they all contain much church age doctrine, these epistles are unique in that their primary doctrinal and dispensational thrust is tribulational. The church age only accounts for 28.5% of human history, as it makes up about 2000 years of the 7000 years of history. It is not logical then to assume that the entire Bible is written in a church age context. The Old Testament deals with the nation of Israel, not the Church. Acts 2-7 is a theological minefield, as it is a transitional period between the Old Testament and Church Age. I teach that it was very possible that Christ could have returned at any time between Acts 2-7, where Israel had a “second chance” to accept the kingdom. That open door was closed at the death of Stephen when Israel rejected his witness. After that, the gospel goes to the Samaritans in Acts 8. In Acts 9, the Apostle to the Gentiles is saved. In Acts 10 and 11, we have the Gentile Pentecost. Then the missionary call to the Gentiles is given in Acts 13 and we move solidly into the Church Age. That lasts until the Rapture.

We find church doctrine primarily in Paul’s epistles, although they are also sprinkled through the gospels, Acts and the other epistles. But since Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles, we would expect him to deal with doctrines that deal with the Church. But Peter was the Apostle to the Circumcision in Galatians 2:7-9. If he was involved in a Jewish ministry, his preaching would be more Jewish in context and this would be reflected in his two epistles.

There are several verses in Hebrews 3 and 6 that simply make no sense in a church age context as they seem to teach that a believer can lose his salvation. Many commentators simply gave up trying to expound these verses. The root of the trouble was that they were trying to fit a round peg (church doctrine) into a square hole (tribulation doctrine). But if the verses were applied to a tribulational context, they make more sense.

James has caused a lot of consternation over the years. Martin Luther hated it because he couldn’t reconcile it to Romans. But Luther’s problem was that he was trying to compare apples and oranges, church doctrine with tribulation doctrine.

John and Jude are also primarily aimed at tribulation saints, although there are still many church age applications to be made in all four epistles. The burden of the commentator is to discern the proper zip code or a certain verse- who is the author speaking to and about? Is this

verse written to me as a Christian or is it written for a saint in the tribulation? Or maybe it has a millennial application?

The root for the majority of heresies today is a dispensational misapplication of verses. When someone claims that a Christian can lose his salvation, he is taking a tribulation doctrine and is trying to apply it to a Christian. If a man claims that a Christian has to “endure to the end to be saved”, citing Matthew 24:13, he is taking a tribulation doctrine and is trying to apply it to the church age. Seventh Day Adventists, with their fixation on Sabbath observance today, have the right doctrine but the wrong dispensation. The same is true with their insistence that Christians have to keep the moral law and the ceremonial law to be saved. That’s good tribulation preaching, but it is heresy for the Christian in the Church Age. But if we can “rightly divide” these verses and place them in the correct dispensations, we will avoid such errors. But this can still be tricky because such verses may be mixed in with church age doctrines and some verses may have a double application that can apply to multiple dispensations. It can be very confusing! This is why the ministry of the Biblical commentator is not for the faint of heart or weak of spirit.

The Bible has to be able to minister and guide to yet future generations, including those who will be saved in the tribulation period. Since the tribulation is a totally different dispensation that the church age is, we would expect a different set of doctrine to be presented for those who go into that dispensation, just as much as we would if we were considering the dispensation of the Millennium. Why do we assume that all of the Bible, especially the New Testament, has to apply only to Christians in this dispensation? The Bible is for all dispensations, so we have to expect there are going to be sections of it that apply to other dispensations than our own. This is not to say that the Christian should totally ignore anything that Paul didn’t write, for there are doctrines and applications all over the Bible that still apply to the Christian. But we must know which ones do and don’t.

With all this in mind, we will delve into Jude, recognizing it as primarily a tribulation epistle with church age applications. After all, look at its neighbor- the book of Revelation, which primarily deals with the tribulation period!

1 John Chapter 1

1:1^{a-b} That^c which was from the beginning,^d which^e we have heard,^{f-g} which we have seen with our eyes,^h which we have looked uponⁱ and our hands have handled,^j of the Word of life;^{k-l}

1a Verses 1-4 lay claim to being the most complicated Greek in John's writings. This observation is usually made in a negative sense, with observations by critics that this is not "good Greek" and "borders on incoherence". These four verses make up the prologue for 1 John which are similar in vocabulary and theme to John 1:1-18, which are the prologue to John's Gospel. Yet John still writes in the simplest style in the Bible. He is basic, straightforward and plain in his style, yet his writings are the deepest and most sublime in Scripture. What a contrast!

1b John, unlike Paul in his epistles, takes no time for introductory formalities. He gets right down to business, like Mark did in his gospel. This is very similar to John 1:1. The beginning of what? Not the creation of Genesis 1:2, but the beginning of God's dealings with man, the beginning of human time. His doctrine then is from the beginning. It is not a novelty or something just recently hatched. This is also a reference to the deity of Christ since He is clearly in view here and is said to be "from the beginning", even "from everlasting" in Micah 5:2. Christ was at the very beginning with the Father and was certainly active at the beginning of the Father's dealings with man.

1c "That" obviously refers to Christ but it should cause no issues that the neuter pronouns used for Christ instead of the masculine pronoun. This is the Greek rendering. After all, Christ is called "that holy thing" in Luke 1:35 and He is prophetically referred to as "it" in Genesis 3:15. The Holy Spirit is also referred to as "it" in Romans 8:16.

1d This is not the same beginning as Genesis 1:1 or John 1:1.

1e Why is Jesus called a "which" instead of a "who"? We see something similar in Philippians 4:13, where Paul refers to Jesus as a "which" instead of a "who". The King James translators are literally rendering the neuter Greek pronoun into the proper English usage. Christ is called a "holy thing" in Luke 1:35. The Holy Spirit is called "itself" by Paul in Romans 8:16. Neuter pronouns are perfectly acceptable to use when referring to persons. Even today, many people will refer to babies (born and unborn) as "it". Also see 1 John 5:4.

1f This is the ear-witness of John. John also writes as a knowledgeable eyewitness, even 60 years after the death of Christ. This personal knowledge and experience John had of Christ is still fresh and vivid in his mind. "I know" is his thrust. It is not what he has heard or what someone told him second-hand, but John's doctrine and conclusions are all first-hand.

1g "heard...handled...seen (1:2)..." Truth always comes through the ear gate first. You "hear" the Word of God first, then handle (examine and consider) and then you "see" it in understanding. Charismatics tend to reverse this, as they are so big on "signs and wonders" that people can see. They relegate preaching to the ear to a secondary importance.

Notice the basis of John's confidence:

1. We heard
2. We saw with our eyes
3. We looked upon

4. We handled

John had personal experiences with Christ during His earthly ministry. He saw the Lord, heard Him teach, considered His teachings and leaned his head on his breast at the Last Supper. John knew the Gnostics were wrong about Christ through his personal experiences. We do not have these advantages that John had but we have the advantage of John's testimony. When you have these kind of experiences, you can be bold for the truth regarding the person of Christ against a whole army of infidels.

We do have some of these experiences that we can also use to strengthen our faith. We have heard the word of God preached. He has also spoken to our hearts. We have seen Him work in our lives and have seen His hand moving on our behalf. We have meditated upon and looked upon His word and His works. We have handled the word of God in a very practical manner in our Christian walk. Based on our own personal experiences and dealings with Christ, we also can be as bold in our declaration and defense of truth as John was, even if we are not apostles as he was.

1h The eye-witness of John. He saw much in those 3½ years he spent with the Lord while He was on earth. First hand, eyewitness testimony and knowledge simply can't be beaten or improved upon. One reason why John can be so certain and dogmatic here is because he was an eyewitness to the work and life of Christ. He saw it all first hand and became convinced beyond any doubt about the doctrines of Christ. The personal testimony of such an eyewitness is a very powerful thing and is very difficult to refute. You can reject it but you can't refute it.

1i "John had drawn very close to the Lord and had often touched Him. Earthly monarchs like to keep their distance from their subjects and rarely allow them to come close. Not so Jesus (John Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of John*, page 26)."

1j The personal-experience of John. This is against Gnosticism, which claims that Jesus did not have a physical body. Gnostics taught that matter was evil and spirit was good. If Jesus was divine, then He must have been all spirit and not matter. His earthly body then was spiritual but only looked physical. But this cannot be. John, as well as the other apostles, as well as the thousands who had contact with Jesus during His earthly ministry, could testify that Jesus had a literal, physical body. He was no phantom, nor was His body an illusion. You would think that someone would have realized that Jesus' body was not truly physical after 42 months of public ministry. And what about the other 30 years of His life? No one detected this? Mary never knew that her son was not really a physical body? Common sense is sufficient to tear down this Gnostic heresy. Jesus' body was as literal and physical as your body. John could testify to that from his personal experience, as the cousin of the Lord and His best earthly friend. John knew what he was talking about from personal experience where the Gnostics, who denied all of this, had no personal experiences to draw upon.

This also refuted the Docetists who denied the real humanity of Christ. John says he saw an actual human body and handled a real human body, not a divine one or a phantom one.

1k "Word of life" Two definitions:

1. Jesus as the Living Word, whose word and teachings impart eternal life to those who hear and believe. This is the primary interpretation since John says they handled this "Word" and the written Scriptures (point 2 below) were not yet written. But only a very few ever physically handled him. That leaves the rest of us with...

2. The written Scriptures. This would be our application, since none of us have physically handled the Lord. But we handled His written Word. In English, these Scriptures would be an Authorized Version.

11 Why does God refer to His earthly incarnation as “the Word” showing up (John 1:1–8)? Because men communicate with men using words and God communicates with man using words. Animals do not communicate with words. The greatest argument against evolution is that you can’t teach any animal how to communicate with any other animal or man or God using words. Man is the only “animal” that argues with God; when he does, he uses words (Romans 3:4).

1:2 (For the life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father,^a and was manifested^b unto us;)

2a "father", *pathr patêr* is used 126 times in John's gospel but only 62 in the other three gospels combined. John draws much attention to the fatherhood of God and its implications for Christians.

2b “manifested” through the incarnation, when God became flesh and dwelt among us visibly and physically. In a sense, Christ was “hidden” in the bosom of the Father before the incarnation. We get hints that God has a Son (Proverbs 30:4) but this full revelation and manifestation of Him does not occur until His incarnation and birth. The burden of John’s writings, yea, all the Biblical writings, is the physical and tangible manifestation of these truths into the life.

1:3 That which we have seen^a and heard declare^b we unto you, that ye^c also may have fellowship with us:^d and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.^{e-f-g}

3a This knowledge and witness that we have of Christ only comes through experience. Yes, there is revelation involved in our fellowship with God, but John uses words “seen” and “have heard”, which shows that we have to go beyond a mere theological and doctrinal knowledge of God and have to literally experience His fellowship with us, even through the physical senses. We know that we have fellowship with God. We’ve heard the Word. We’ve seen Him work in our lives. We feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. No unsaved man has any of these experiences, which is why he can never get beyond a “mere head-knowledge” of the things of God. We can try to explain these blessings to a natural man, but until He accepts this revelation by faith, he will never be able to experience this experiential knowledge of fellowship with God.

3b “declare” with authority, since John had his first-hand knowledge and experience of what he wrote. See how John hammers this sure nail of truth fast! He knew he was right, beyond any shadow of doubt, and that enabled him to make dogmatic declarations. False teachers might sound dogmatic in their pronouncements but there is always an undercurrent of doubt and uncertainty. Why could Jesus teach with authority, unlike the scribes? Because He knew the Truth in an absolute sense. Such assurance gives one a sense of authority and assertiveness that false teachers and the agnostic cannot have. False teachers hem and haw and you can never get them pinned down on anything. False churches and cults are known for their

constantly shifting doctrines (for a good example, read up on the doctrinal history of the Jehovah Witnesses), while genuine churches are rock solid and unchanging in their doctrines.

John was not the only one to “declare” the deity of Jesus Christ. Also consider the following declarations by both His friends and enemies:

1. Matthew: “God with us” (Immanuel), “conceived...of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1).
2. A Roman centurion: “Truly this was the SON of God” (Matthew 27:54).
3. The unclean spirits: “Thou art the SON of God” (Mark 3:11).
4. The angel Gabriel “shall be called the SON of God” (Luke 1:35).
5. Devils: “Thou are Christ, the SON of God” (Luke 4:41).
6. John the Baptist: “this is the SON of God” (John 1:34).
7. Nathaniel: “Thou art the SON of God” (John 1:49).
8. Simon Peter: “Thou art...the SON of the living God” (John 6:69).
9. Martha: “Thou art the Christ, the SON of God” (John 11:27).
10. John: “That Jesus is the Christ, the SON of God” (John 20:31), “The SON of God was manifested” (1 John 3:8); “We know that the SON of God is come” (1 John 5:20); “God sent His only begotten SON” (1 John 4:9).
11. Paul: “Declared to be the SON of God” (Romans 1:4).
12. Jesus Christ Himself: John 5:18,25, 9:35, 19:7; Luke 22:70–71; Matthew 11:27.

3c Emphatic.

3d This is one of the reasons why John wrote this epistle, that the readers, through acceptance and acknowledgement of the truth, might have fellowship with the apostle and his associates and be partakers of the spiritual benefits of Christianity right along with them. But such a fellowship must be based upon the truth and nothing else. Love cannot be the basis of fellowship for love is subjective while truth is objective. Charismatics, new evangelicals and ecumenists all base their fellowships on love instead of on truth and wind up with doctrinal compromise and error. The Bible Believer demands separation to keep himself pure from such errors and insists that his fellowships be based upon love. This is going to keep his circle of fellowships somewhat small but they will be right!

“But John, what is the value of fellowship with you—even you and your brethren—a parcel of poor fishermen? Who wants fellowship with you—hooted, despised, mocked and persecuted in every city—who wants fellowship with you? What a leap from the fisherman to the Father’s Throne! From the poor, despised son of Zebedee up to the King of Kings! Oh, John, we would have fellowship with you now! We will have fellowship with your scorn and spitting, that we may have fellowship with you and with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ! (Charles Spurgeon, Exposition of John 1:1-2:10 in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, volume 57).”

3e If you are in fellowship with the Father, then you are in fellowship with His church on earth, which is the body of Christ. We are not talking about a denominational fellowship or a fellowship built around a theological system, but fellowship with the universal church, the Body of Christ, which is trans-denominational. We are not Landmarkers or Baptist Briders, who insist that the only true New Testament Church is their kind of a Baptist Church. That attitude is nothing more than baptized Romanism. We will not restrict our fellowship only to someone who has a Baptist tag on him. I will fellowship with a Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, with anyone, as long as they are in fellowship with the Father. If the Father approves of their heart, then who am I to presume not to enter into fellowship with them? Is that not sufficient? Do I have higher standards than God? My position must be that I am in fellowship with anyone who is in fellowship with the Father, regardless of denominational tag. This is the heartbeat of a genuine Christian. A genuine Bible Believer will reach across denominational boundaries and barriers and embrace anyone who has a remnant Christian heart. This is because Remnant Christianity

has historically been a trans-denominational movement. But for a Baptist (or anyone else) to restrict his fellowship only to other Baptists is to miss the point of the verse and is to needlessly restrict potential fellowships.

"The old cannot have communion with the young in the pleasures of youth, nor the philosopher with the ignorant savage, in the pursuits of the chase. The blind can enjoy no fellowship with those who see...nor the deaf, with those who hear, in the harmony of sounds. Unless persons resemble each other...there can be no mutual communication of joys and sorrows between them; they cannot enter into each other's language, enjoy each other's society, or form an intimate, happy and lasting union. But, on the other hand, when persons meet who resemble each other in temper, character, age and situation, who love and hate the same things, and pursue and avoid the same objects, they readily unite...Similitude, similarity of nature, of character and pursuits, must therefore be the basis of all true fellowship or communion...no creatures can enjoy communion with God and His Son, but those, who are partakers of his divine nature, who resemble him in their moral character, and who love, hate and pursue those things which are respectively the objects of his love, hatred and pursuit (Edward Payson, "Fellowship With The Father and the Son" in *Complete Works*, 3:269-270)."

3f A very clear and unmistakable declaration of the divine sonship of Christ, and, by extension, of the trinity.

3g What does "fellowship" with God involve?

1. Being friends with each other, at the very least
2. A commonality of interests, likes and philosophies, common goals and desires
3. Being in agreement with each other and a willingness to work together
4. Enjoying each other's company
5. Enjoying spending time with each other
6. Walking together and agreeing (Amos 3:3)

1:4 And these things write we unto you,^a that your joy^{b-c} may be full.^{d-e-f}

4a John writes all this to refute the heretics and their attacks upon the humanity of Christ. John, from his own personal experience, knew the truth. He personally knew the Lord. They did not. He heard Him speak. They hadn't. He leaned upon His breast at the Last Supper. They hadn't. He was there at the cross and they weren't. John was a witness of the resurrection and the ascension. The apostates weren't. So they knew nothing of what they professed!

John wrote this in a book that is included as one of the 66 books in The Book. This shows the importance of the written word and the Bible. God communicates through His written word and the truth of God is preserved on earth in books, more precisely, The Book, which in English, is the Authorized Version.

4b Our English word "Charismatic" comes from this word, supposedly meaning "one full of joy" but now means "one who is fully immersed in error and compromise". Compare this with John 15:11; 16:24 and 17:13 for similar language about joy. This does not apply to the unsaved for they cannot have joy. Christians can, but only if they are in fellowship with the Father. A backslidden Christian or a compromised Christian cannot have joy because his fellowship with the Father is not right. We have said it many times that all you have to worry about is your relationship with the Father, that to make sure that you are in fellowship with the Father. If you are, then you are spiritually right. If you are not, you are backslidden and in danger of being led

off into apostasy. And it is obvious that no unsaved man has this kind of joy as he knows not God nor does he have fellowship with Him. Every Christian should have this joy, as it is the second fruit of the Spirit.

4c "If the Christian's joy consisted in the wine vat, the feast, or his riches, John would not have written as he does— then it would only be necessary that the vineyard should yield plenteous clusters, that the harvest should be crowned with abundance and that God should prosper trade and send to the merchant all that his heart could wish. But the Christian's deepest and best joy does not depend on these things. They cannot satisfy his nobler nature. He thanks God for all earthly joys, but he cannot feast his soul upon them— he needs something better. When John writes, "These things write we unto you that your joy may be full," there is nothing about prosperity in this world, but all about fellowship with Christ, from which I infer that everything revealed to us in the Scriptures has for its supreme purpose the filling up of the Believer's joy!... I do not doubt but that you have the proofs of this in yourselves, in your eternal circumstances. You cannot always rejoice, because although your treasure is not of this world, yet sometimes your affliction is here. Poverty is sometimes too heavy a cross for you to sing under it. Sickness casts you on a bed upon which you have not as yet learned to rejoice. There will be losses in business, disappointment of fond hopes. The forsaking of friends, the cruelty of foes and any of these may prove the winter nights and nip the green leaves of your joys and make them fade and fall from your bough. You cannot always rejoice, but sometimes there is a necessity that you should be, "in heaviness through manifold temptations." (Charles Spurgeon, "How to Become Full of Joy", sermon 3272)."

4d "that your joy may be full" is the purpose and motivation behind John's writing of this epistle. A Christian life should be one in which the joy of the Lord figures prominently, and these blessings should be shared. We must not be selfish with these blessings of fellowship, but we should desire that both the backslider may be restored to this level of joy and that the unsaved man may be introduced to it. We have no basis to hoard it only for ourselves. And John wants us to have "full joy", not just joy, in the same way the Lord said He came to give us not just life, but "life, and that more abundantly" in John 10:10. It was also the Lord's desire that our joy would be full in John 16:24.

Even a few drops of this heavenly joy will far outweigh all the accumulated joys this fallen world can muster or offer. What sort of "joy" can the world give? Joy of a bottle of booze? A cigarette? A night of adultery? Money and fame? A weekend of sin? Going to a nightclub? But these "joys" are fleshly, temporary and lead to the pit. Thus, they are no "joys" at all but are rather great sorrows.

Of course, you will have disappointments, discouragements, failures and various other set-backs in your walk with God, but you should have no complaint or issue with the Lord! You are still saved, still a child of God and still justified, redeemed, forgiven and on your way to heaven, regardless of what goes on down here or what the Lord, in His providence, allows to come into your life!

We should be experiencing joy on a continual basis, since it is one of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. This is not merely happiness as we can lose that through circumstances, or just through "blue moods". But joy is enduring, despite your circumstances. Not many people are happy to suffer or go to the stake to be burned, but martyrs can have joy even while their body is being burnt.

4e "The apostle could not write these words without having full in his memory, and in his heart, the Lord's own thrice-repeated intimation of a similar sentiment in his farewell discourses and farewell prayer: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11); "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John

16: 24); "These things I speak in the world, that they "--" those whom thou hast given me"--" might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13) (Robert Candlish, *The First Epistle General of John*)."

4f Other Biblical observations about "joy":

1. The joy of the hypocrite is short- Job 20:5
2. In the presence of God is fullness of joy- Psalm 16:11
3. Sacrifices of joy- Psalm 27:6
4. God our exceeding joy- Psalm 43:4
5. Mt. Zion is the joy of the whole earth- Psalm 48:2
6. Sowing in tears will allow us to reap a harvest of joy- Psalm 126:5
7. Folly is joy for the fool- Proverbs 15:21
8. The joy of the just is to do judgment- Proverbs 21:15
9. Heaven rejoices when a sinner is saved- Luke 15:10
10. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit- Galatians 5:22
11. We are to joy when we fall into temptations- James 1:2
12. The greatest joy is when our (spiritual) children walk in truth- 3 John 4

1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you,^a that God is light,^{b-c-d} and in him is no darkness at all.^e

5a As a good witness, John simply and faithfully tells what he knows. This is all we require out of a witness, simply tell us what you know, what you saw, what you heard. A witness is not called upon to explain, defend or expound upon the subject of his witness, but to simply relate and faithfully tell what he knows and what he has seen. John says that this message is not from him or of him but of and by God. It is not John's message although it is his witness and he is responsible for the faithful transmission of that message.

5b "It is usual with the Cabalistic Jews to call the supreme Being "wr", "light", the most simple light, hidden light and infinite light, with respect to his nature, glory and majesty, and with regard also to his grace and mercy, justice and judgment; though as Rabbi Sangari says 'this is to be understood of him figuratively' (John Gill, *Exposition on the New and Old Testaments*, 9:618)." Since "God is light", this is why sun worship was so popular among the heathen, since the sun was the closest thing they could think of that represented God.

5c John has three such descriptions of God:

1. God is Spirit (John 4:24)
2. God is light (1 John 1:5)
3. God is love (1 John 4:8).

5d Light has a few interesting properties. One of them is that light cannot be defiled. It may pass through mud or diamonds, yet it remains pure. But it does reveal the corruption and defilement of the materials that it does pass through. Truth is like this. Truth remains truth, despite any and all attempts of error to corrupt it. Yet the presence of truth will always reveal the error around it. As light always exposes dirt, truth will always expose error.

5e "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Here is a positive statement followed by a corresponding negative one. This is spoken of in an absolute sense, not in a descriptive sense of God. A rule of Greek grammar is that the absence of the definite article shows quality, nature and essence and there is no definite article before "phôs". God is not the light or a light or made

of light, but He is light. John deals with this thought more at length in John 1:5,7-9. Light here is a symbol for the truth, holiness, glory, purity and of godliness. God is all these in His essence and nature. Light is the only visible manifestation of God. The darkness is everything that is the opposite of this- sin, unholiness, etc. God is absolutely perfect and flawless in all His attributes. There is none of this darkness in the Father, as He is wholly and entirely pure and holy. This is why we believe that Jesus, as a man in His earthly ministry, could not have sinned, because there was no darkness in Him. Christ, during the days of His flesh, was both God and man, but His human nature was an unfallen, sinless nature. He could not have sinned. It is not a question of that He simply chose not to sin, but Jesus could not have sinned because He was God and because there is no darkness at all in Him. John often expresses truth in this manner, presenting it in both a positive and then a negative manner. This mode of speaking is commonly used by John, to amplify what he has affirmed by a contrary negation.

1:6 If we say^a that we have fellowship with him,^b and walk in darkness, we lie,^{c-d-e} and do not the truth:^f

6a Notice the three negative statements mentioned in this chapter with their corresponding results:

1. 1:6 If we say (or boast) that we have communion with the Father while continuing to walk in darkness THEN we are liars and do not the truth.
2. 1:8 If we say (or boast) that we are free from the guilt of sin, THEN we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
3. 1:10 If we say (or boast) that we have not sinned, THEN we make the Father out to be a liar and His word is not in us.

Notice then these three corresponding positive conditions:

1. 1:7 If we walk in the light as He is in the light THEN we have fellowship with Him.
2. 1:9 If we confess our sins THEN He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
3. 2:1 But if any man sins THEN we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous and He is the propitiation for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

6b Maintaining and strengthening your fellowship with God is the most important thing a Christian has to worry about in his life. The most important thing for the Christian is NOT soulwinning or missions or evangelism or bus ministries or scholarship or "building a great work for God"- it is maintaining and strengthening your walk with God. If that fails, all else in the Christian life is lost. You will not win people to Christ if you're not right with God. Forget about the mission field if you are not right with God. Forget about pastoring a church or starting a church if you are not right with God. And your degree from some "Bastion of Orthodoxy" that is training "Champions For Christ" means nothing unless you have Christ. This is the "key" when doing "Christian counseling." When dealing with a husband and wife that are having trouble in their marriage, the root of the problem is that one (or both) of them is out of fellowship with God. We can't be right with each other (as Christians) if we are not right with God. This also applies to church issues. When church members are causing trouble, it is because they are out of fellowship with God.

6c There are three lies, in 1:6,8 and 10:

1. If we say we have fellowship with God yet walk in darkness, we lie- 1:6. We lie to others.
2. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves- 1:8. We lie to ourselves.

3. If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar- 1:10. We call God a liar.

6d If God is Light to the exclusion of all darkness, then fellowship with darkness excludes fellowship with Him. Here is a hindrance to fellowship: walking in darkness. This is not the darkness of gloom or depression but the darkness of sin. Say what you want, but if you are walking in spiritual darkness, you do not have fellowship with the Father and you are not saved. A Christian will not walk in sin, error, apostasy, carnality. This is one of the identifying characteristics of a Christian. If a man professes to be a Christian yet still lives as a sinner or is in gross, unchristian error, then that man is not a Christian, despite any profession he may make. This is the error of antinomianism, which teaches that a Christian is not under the authority of the law and that he may live as he pleases. His relationship to God or his spirituality does not depend upon his relationship to the law. You can live like the devil and still be in fellowship with God! These sinners are rebels against the law of God and deeply resent anyone, even God, trying to tell them how to live or what they cannot do. John makes it clear- you cannot walk in darkness and expect to have fellowship with the Father. You must get out of the darkness and into the light. You must live under the law (not to be saved but because you love God) and walk in the light in order to have fellowship. Otherwise, your profession of salvation, spirituality and fellowship is nothing but a lie. What about the error? If a man is a postmillennialist or holds to a mid-tribulation rapture, is he lost? No. We are talking about a rejection of the so-called "fundamentals of the faith." If a man rejects the virgin birth, doctrine of the trinity, deity of Christ, personality of the Holy Spirit, salvation by grace, the second coming, and so on, then he is not saved, for a Christian would believe these doctrines since they are the truth. Matters of interpretation are different. Whether a man is a Calvinist or an Arminian does not affect his salvation, despite what some of the more militant followers of John Calvin will try to tell you. Whether a man is pre-millennial, post-millennial or a-millennial does not affect his salvation. Whether a man believes in a pre-tribulation rapture, a mid-tribulation rapture, a post-tribulation rapture or no rapture at all does not affect his salvation. If a man does not use an Authorized Version of the Bible, it does not affect his salvation. It may affect some of his doctrine, practice and fellowship but not his salvation. Matters of interpretation do not determine salvation. Fundamental doctrines of the faith do.

We think of some modern professing Fundamentalists who think that as long as they are "winning souls" and as long as their churches and Sunday Schools are growing that they are right with God, despite apostasies and immoralities in their lives. John exposes such men as Gnostic in belief. as the Gnostics basically believed the same thing. Works do not lay the foundation for fellowship with God, but rather, truth does. If one is living a lie through a low-level Christian life, then he does not know God, even if he is baptizing 5000 people a year and even if his church is "growing". We cannot gauge a man's spirituality or relationship with God by external means. A man may have a huge church with lots of activity and be seriously out of fellowship with God. A man may pastor just a handful of people and yet be walking in the Light.

6e There were those Gnostics and other false teachers in John's day who imagined themselves to be so spiritually advanced and enlightened, but their lives did not reflect it. They were just as morally rotten as the people they looked down upon. John says if they were truly as close to the true God as they claimed, their lives would reflect such a closeness and fellowship. Many modern false teachers are the same way. We see them on "Christian television", claiming to have such unusual power with God. At the same time, they are going through divorces and are stealing monies from their ministries. If the "walk" doesn't match the "talk", then the "talk" is totally worthless and you are under no obligation to take them, or their teachings, seriously, for they are false prophets.

6f What are these doctrines and truths necessary for salvation, listed in 1 John?

1. If a man rejects the truth that Jesus is the Christ, he is an antichrist (2:22).
2. A man who does not keep His commandments does not know the Father (2:4).
3. If you hate your brother, you are in darkness (2:11) and are a murderer (3:15).
4. If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you (2:15).
5. Whoever denies the Son has not the Father (2:23).
6. If a man rejects the doctrine that Jesus is come in the flesh, he is an antichrist (4:3).
7. Whoever does not love (4:8)

1:7 But if we walk in the light,^a as he^b is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.^{c-d-e-f-g}

7a This man is in the light, unlike the man in 1:6. This man is living by the law, fulfilling the law and truly loves God. His profession is thus accurate and true. Notice the condition for fellowship with Christ and the Father- we must walk in the light. We must renounce the darkness of sin, carnality and evil and embrace the truth, with all that it entails. This is the only way we can have fellowship with the Father, and ultimately, with each other, since our fellowship with each other is based upon our fellowship with the Father.

7b “as he is in the light” is emphatic in the Greek text, showing that God and God alone is Light and that He alone is in the Light.

7c Walking in the light gives us two benefits:

1. Fellowship with the Father. This is one of the great benefits of Christianity- fellowship with God Almighty! No other “world religion” even begins to deal with this other than Biblical Christianity. And we have fellowship with the brethren because we have a mutual fellowship with our mutual God around a mutual faith. It matters not how strong we are spiritually. If we live right, we have fellowship with God. This puts the apostate and the backslider, who are not walking in the light, into a very bad situation regarding their fellowship with God.

2. Forgiveness of sins. The other great benefit of Christianity, to have our sin problem dealt with once and for all by God Himself.

7d The Johannine redemptive language contains many words to describe what has been done to sin, including (Greek words in the parentheses):

1. forgive (aphienai): John 20:23; 1 John 1:9; 2:12.
2. take away (airein): John 1:29; 1 John 3:5.
3. destroy (lyein): 1 John 3:8.
4. atonement, expiation (hilasmos): 1 John 2:2; 4:10.
5. cleanse (katharizein): 1 John 1:7,9.
6. clean (katharos): John 13:10,11

7e The remedy for sin- the blood of Christ. This is the only remedy, as nothing else can deal with the sin problem. This is salvation, where sin is forgiven. How is sin forgiven? Only by the literal application of the literal blood of Christ upon the literal mercy seat in heaven. There is no other way. There is no alternative, especially when it comes to religious rite and ritual. All of the inventions of man are worthless when it comes to dealing with the sin problem and cleansing from sin. Men may also try to have some religious experience they had be the means of cleansing. Someone may have been cured of cancer or spoke in tongues or saw an angel at the foot of their bed (probably after eating a pound of onion rings) and appeal to that as some ground of cleansing. But John knows nothing of it and will have none of it. It is blood and blood alone.

We must reject all theological attempts to spiritualize the blood of Christ away. To do so is spiritual suicide, for "spiritualized blood" cannot wash away literal sin. To deny the saving power or necessity of the literal blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sin is to deny the only God-ordained way to obtain forgiveness of sin and salvation. Any other way or plan of salvation that is not based upon the literal blood of Christ will lead those unfortunate enough to place their faith in it to hell. Notice the "all sin". Christ is not half-savior. He cleanses all sin, past, present and future. This is one reason why we believe in eternal security. If there was a sin that could cause a Christian to lose his salvation, could we then say that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin? What about that sin that supposedly would cause you lose your salvation? The verse would have to read "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from most sin" or "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from some sin." Of course it doesn't read like that. We must hold to the universal cleansing of sin through the blood of Christ.

7f "all sin." Thank God for that! The blood of Christ misses no sin but is comprehensive and totally effective in its cleansing application. Christ is no partial Savior Who only takes care of part of the problem, or for a limited period of time. What Christ does He does well, properly, correctly, thoroughly and eternally.

And what a cost! Not silver nor gold but the very blood of the Son of God! The worth of one soul is infinite! To pay for the sins of all mankind staggers limited human imagination to grasp the cost. This is why we should never despise what Christ did for us and never despise our salvation, for no other reason than for the cost involved. This is why we should never take sin lightly. When we contemplate sin, let us always remember the awful cost that was required to pay for and forgive this sin we are thinking about committing!

"all..." Naturally, "all" means "all", and it means "all" even if you "run to the Greek." Thankfully, Calvinistic rules of English and Greek grammar do not apply here. Whenever they see a verse like 1 Timothy 2:4, where God desires ALL men to be saved, they translate "all" into "all kinds", not "all" in a numerical sense. This is done to preserve their precious doctrine of unconditional election, limited atonement and reprobation. Imagine if we interpreted a verse like this with that sort of presupposition. We would have to translate this verse as "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all kinds of sin", leaving open the possibility that there could be some sins that the blood of Christ does not cleanse since the sense of the word is not comprehensive.

7g We notice the present tense of "cleanseth". We are cleansed from sin right now, immediately, It is a present-tense possession whose benefits are to be enjoyed immediately. Thankfully, we do not have to wait until we die to determine whether we are saved or not or whether our sins have been cleansed. We can know right at this very instant! Nor is it an act that is done by degrees or by progression. God cleanses us immediately, at once, once and for all, in an instant, and then is finished with it.

1:8 If we say^a that we have no sin,^b we deceive ourselves,^c and the truth is not in us.^d

8a This is a worthless profession. To deny that we have any sin or that we still possess a sinful nature after salvation is to deceive ourselves as well as others. We believe our own lie. We may be saved and have the new, divine nature implanted within us at salvation, but the old, sinful, Adamic nature was not eradicated at salvation. It is still there and we are still doing battle against it every day. God will not take it away until death or rapture. Until that day, we must fight manfully onward against it.

This also is against certain Pentecostal teachings that the Adamic nature can be eradicated in some future "second blessing" after salvation. The Bible teaches no such thing.

Even if we have been saved 50 years, we must still consider the truth of this verse. But this also applies to anyone who denies his sin nature or that he has any problem with sin.

You will occasionally meet someone who claims he is not a sinner or a professing Christian who claims that he has not sinned in 10 years. But both are self-deceived. The sin nature is not eradicated at salvation- it simply is given the competition of the new man. But the old man is still there and will be until death or rapture. Instead of denying the existence of the sinful nature, it must be acknowledged, confronted and dealt with by the atonement of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the life. We are cleansed from sin but we are not without sin.

John is also going after the Gnostics here, who claimed that they had no sin. The Gnostics were claiming that they had ascended to the "next level" by virtue of their superior knowledge and hidden revelations. They were now spiritual instead of material. Evil was resident in matter but not in spirit. Since they have ascended into the realm of matter, they had no sin. Any sin that they may have done with their physical bodies did not harm them spiritually. John calls any such teaching of sinless perfectionism a heresy. John will condemn any and all forms of sinless perfectionism in 1:8-10.

8b Another hindrance to fellowship- denying the fact of our sin. This is repeated in 1:10. "Let it be remembered, however, that while the man who has deceived! himself says, "I have no sin," he has not deceived the Lord. God sees sin in us if we do not. The ostrich is reported to bury her head in the sand, and then to suppose herself safe, but she is the more speedily taken; and we may shut our eyes and say, "have no sin," but in so doing instead of securing eternal salvation we shall as practically give ourselves up to the destroyer as the bird of the desert is fabled to do. Let a man say, "I have no sin," and he has condemned himself out of his own mouth, for the text says of such a man the truth is not in him, and he who hath not truth in him is not saved. The absence of confession of present sin means the absence of the light of truth, and sincerity. (Charles Spurgeon, "Honest Dealing With God", Sermon 1241)."

8c No one else is deceiving us about our spiritual state, we are voluntarily doing it to ourselves. We are lying to ourselves and we know we are but we love to have it so, to convince ourself that despite all of our sin and carnality, everything is really alright and we are still in fellowship with God. To have someone deceive us is bad enough. But to lie to ourself is even worse, and worse yet is when we believe the liar and his lie!

And while we can deceive ourselves, we cannot deceive God on this, or any other matter.

8d If we say that we have not sinned then we deny that we are sinners and thus deny the need for a Savior. Sinners need a Savior. If you have no sin, you have no need of a Savior. This calls the entire redemptive work of Christ on the cross into question and nullifies it in our own lives.

1:9 If we confess^{a-b} our sins,^c he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,^d and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.^e

9a The classic verse. We must confess that we still sin, even after salvation. This must be confessed. These sins are confessed to God, since all sin is ultimately against Him. We confess to God and then we confess to the offended party, but we go to God first. The only way to peace with God is not to deny our sins and to pretend they do not exist but rather to confess them and allow God to deal with them and then bring us back into fellowship. A false teacher or a mere professor would never admit his sins or that he sins or makes mistakes. A true Christian is forever lamenting his corruptions. A man who never admits he's wrong, never admits he sins,

never takes the blame, never admits an error, is no Christian. He is a false teacher and an apostate.

The Tyndale, Coverdale, Geneva and Bishops Bibles use “acknowledge”. One could technically “acknowledge” one’s sins (like Pharaoh and Judas) with a genuine, Biblical confession of them. This is why the “confess” of the Authorized Version and ESV is better. Confessing our sins involves acknowledging them but then agreeing with God about the fact and the seriousness of our sins, and then admitting our wrongdoing.

We confess our sins to God, not some Roman Catholic priest with a backward collar and backward theology.

9b “confess” has the idea of agreeing with God or saying the same thing about our sins that God says. Instead of arguing whether we have sinned or if a certain thing we said or did was a sin, we go to the Word of God, examine it, and if it condemns that act as a sin, we are to agree with it, call it a sin, and then ask forgiveness for it. This confession of sin is not the basis of our salvation but rather our maintaining fellowship with God.

9c Yes, we as Christians still have sins we need to confess. No Christian is sinlessly perfect as no such doctrine is taught in the Scripture. Even the most mature and advanced Christian sins and when he does, there is a provision made for it. John at no time assumes that there is a class of Christians that this promise would not apply to.

And we must confess our own, personal sins. We are pretty good at confessing the sins of others yet often we remain blind to our own. The sins we tend to condemn in others are usually sins that we also are guilty of.

Every believer should confess his sins regularly. True confession involves a complete acknowledgement of our sins with an admission of guilt with no excuses offered.

9d God is very willing and eager to forgive our sins, if we will confess them. No limit is placed on this forgiveness. Any sin we commit can be forgiven, regardless of its severity. God will forgive it but we may still have to pay for it. For example, if I sin in cutting off my arm, the Lord will forgive me for it if I confess it but I won't get my arm back. If I kill someone, the Lord will forgive me but I must still go to the electric chair. If I commit adultery, the Lord will forgive it but I am out of the ministry and I may lose my family and I must live with the stigma for the rest of my life.

When a Christian sins (notice I said "when", not "if"), then he is to acknowledge the fact of that sin, confess it to the Lord. He then promises to forgive that sin. Nothing is said about asking for forgiveness. God promises to forgive if we confess. We need not ask for this forgiveness as it is extended to us already. Our sins are already forgiven through the blood of Christ on the cross, so we do not need to plow over that ground again. But confession is necessary for restoration of full fellowship. Now if we are saved, these sins will not send us to hell, for our sin debt has been paid for in full by Christ on Calvary. What these post-salvation sins do is to break our fellowship with the Father. Our fellowship will suffer if we do not acknowledge or confess our sins. That damaged fellowship can only be repaired and restored when the offending unconfessed sins are confessed and then forgiven by the Lord.

9e Just like the “all sin” observation in 1:7. God misses nothing when He sets out to cleanse a sinner. Christ is no half-Savior, for what He does, He does right the first time, and He does it well, in its entirety, missing no spot or stain.

1:10 If we say^a that we have not sinned, we make him a liar,^b and his word is not in us.^{c-d}

10a "If we say" has the idea of boasting about our supposed sinless condition. There are many Holiness and Pentecostal groups that endorse the false doctrine of sinless perfection and second blessing which are opposed by John.

This is in the Greek perfect tense. The idea is if we deny we have any sin at all, or if we deny that we sin at all, then His word is not in us. It is a denial of a sinful nature or a sinful practice, as if we have received some "second blessing" and now we are above any sinning. This is not just a cursory denial of some specific sin, but a denial that we are sinners at all. This borders on the dreaded doctrine of sinless perfection and it is condemned in the strongest terms.

10b For God clearly states the universality of sin (Psalm 14:3; 51:5; Isaiah 53:6; Jeremiah 17:5,6; Romans 3:10-19,23; 6:23...) and that means everyone, including you, and the Virgin Mary. The audacity of fallen man to charge His God and Creator with lying! But whenever we deny that we have either sinned or that we are still possession of a sinful nature after salvation, that is exactly the sin we are guilty of.

10c This is similar to 1:8. If we deny that we are sinners (even after salvation) or that we have sinned as Christians, we lie and are in error. We are liars and we call the Lord a liar because He has clearly said numerous times in Scripture that all have sinned and that all men are guilty of sin.

10d Such a verse as this strikes at the very heart of the dreaded doctrine of eradication/perfectionism, espoused by some Pentecostal groups. This teaches that a Christian can have a "second experience of grace" or a "baptism of the Holy Spirit" years after his initial salvation experience which will eradicate the sin nature. Thus, this person will not sin again. They will usually appeal to the writings of John Wesley to bolster such a doctrine but Wesley did not teach a sinless eradication. He discussed "perfect love" but not eradication of the sin nature. It was the second generation Methodists, especially the commentator Adam Clarke, who developed such a doctrine from Wesley's writings. Yet we maintain that no such doctrine of eradication exists. There will never come a point in the life of a Christian where he will stop sinning. What about Wesley's "perfect love?" That involves growth in grace to a point where we will not willingly sin, or where we love God more than self and sin. It is another name for maturity, or a Biblical perfection and maturity. We will always struggle with sin but the Bible says that we can resist it and have the victory over it if our love toward God is as it should be. But the old sinful nature inherited from Adam will be with us from death or rapture.

1 John Chapter 2

2:1 My little children,^a these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.^{b-c} And if any man sin,^d we have an advocate^e with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:^{f-g-h-i-j}

1a The term "little children" is used 9 times in 1 John. John is writing to Christians but he uses a very affectionate term, as a spiritual father to spiritual children. John was an old man by this time and was probably the last surviving apostle. Any other Christian would be younger in the faith than he, so he would and could address any other believer as a "little child". The term does not imply immaturity on the part of these people but is rather a term of endearment. John heard the Lord use this term and it also became a favorite with him. John will use this term seven times in this letter.

1b This is another purpose of the writing of this epistle. Christians need not sin if our love toward Christ is right. Our problem is that our love for Christ is not right, it is not strong, it is not where it ought to be. So we sin due to a misplaced love. Proper love toward Christ would result in no deliberate sin on our part. If we really loved God as we ought, then how could we even stand the thought of offending Him with our sin? Such a thought would destroy us!

The burden of Scripture is for Christians to stop sinning. This is possible for the Christian, else why is this here? This was the burden of John Wesley. He wanted to know if it was possible for love to be perfected in this life so that we would no longer sin. Wesley never taught sinless perfection, despite Calvinist slanders against him. The second-generation Methodists began to pick up that heresy, led by the commentator Adam Clarke. But can we reach the point where we will not deliberately sin? John thinks so, for it is his desire that we "sin not". If such a state could not be attained in this life then John is teasing us with something that is impossible. We are not talking about any sort of sinless perfection or "second blessing" or Charismatic-type "baptism in the Holy Ghost" that supposedly takes place years after salvation. We are talking about love to God being perfected to the point that we love God more than sin and we would not deliberately sin. This point can be reached but I personally know of no one who has reached it. But that does not mean that no one has reached it or could not! But "that ye sin not" is the burden of the Bible. The Holy Spirit wants to get us to a point of spiritual maturity where we would not deliberately sin, where we would not sin on purpose. We know that we are reaching this high level of spirituality when we would rather die than sin and when the very thought of sin becomes as repulsive to us as if you were served a plate of rotten eggs.

The very fact that an advocate has been given to us by the Father only demonstrates the fact that we have need of one. If we had no sin problem, we would have no need of an advocate.

1c The Christian is not free from sin but he is no longer free to sin. (D. L. Moody, *Notes From My Bible*).

1d But this is not a hopeless case, as God has made a provision for sinning saints!

1e "advocate" Strong's #3875 *paraklhtov* parakletos; summoned, called to one's side, called to one's aid, one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate, one who pleads another's cause with one, an intercessor, of Christ in his exaltation at God's right hand, pleading with God the Father for the pardon of our sins, in the widest sense, a helper, assistant, of the Holy Spirit destined to take the place of Christ with the apostles (after his ascension to the Father), to lead them to a deeper knowledge of the gospel truth, and give them divine strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the divine kingdom.

Our advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ, not any earthly priest, such as the Roman Catholic Church insists upon. This verse is then a rebuke against the priestcraft of Rome as well as Mary worship, as Rome elevates her to a position of Co-Mediatrix, or another Mediator between man and God. All this is error. No human priest is our advocate, nor is Mary- only Jesus!

No unsaved man has any sort of advocate as this, as John says "we" (Christians) have an advocate. This applies only to Christians, but not to any sinner. He needs a Savior before he needs an advocate.

"Many years ago, when the "Little Flower" (Mayor LaGuardia of New York) was a probate judge in New York City, he had a fella brought into court who was to be tried for stealing a loaf of bread (Prov. 6:30). They found the "thief" guilty. LaGuardia (the judge) fined him \$10.00 and then paid the felon's fine out of his own billfold. Then he fined the courtroom \$50.00 for living in a town where any man had to steal bread to keep from starving. Then he took up a collection for the poor "criminal" and sent him "packing" out of the courtroom with \$47.50 in his pocket. Now, brother, when you have a probate judge like THAT, you've got you "an advocate." I've got an Advocate... My Advocate found me guilty on all counts and sentenced me to hell. Then He went through it for me while forgiving all my sins. Then heaping mercy on mercy, He gave me eternal life as a free gift and furnished me with a perfect guide Book. If that were not enough, He sent me out of court with an infallible, inerrant, living "Comforter" to take me on my way (Peter Ruckman, *The Books of the General Epistles* 2:33)."

No unsaved has an advocate to handle his sins, which is why he is in the mess he is in. He has to handle his own sin problem himself, without any help. It is like a man on trial for first degree murder and he has to serve as his own lawyer against the prosecutor who is Perry Mason, a lawyer who has never lost a case. As they say in the legal profession, "A man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client." The sinner who tries to pay for or handle his own sin problem is the biggest fool in the universe. Why not just let Jesus handle it for you, for free?

1f But we do sin. We do not have to sin but we do. This danger is ever-present with us. Our love will probably never be perfect while we continue to live in a body of flesh. This was the burden of John Wesley. He wanted to know if a man could attain a perfect love in this life. This should also be our burden- can we perfect our love in this life so that we would not deliberately sin?

But what if we do sin? After all, our love is not perfect and we will sin. What do we do then? Thankfully, we are not left to our own devices for forgiveness and restoration. John says we have an "advocate" with the Father. This would be very similar to a lawyer who pleads our case in court on a continual basis. We are guilty and deserve punishment and condemnation, but Christ keeps reminding the Father that He has paid for our entire sin debt with the blood of His cross and our sin then is already paid for. So right now, we have Christ, at the heavenly mercy seat, interceding on our behalf, representing us before the Father as He has dealt with our sin at the Mercy Seat. Although we sin, we need not worry if we confess that sin since Jesus is pleading on our behalf. But if He is defending us, who is the adversary? It must be Satan, who constantly accuses us before the Father. We certainly give him the reason and opportunity to accuse us! And we are certainly in no condition to defend ourselves for we are guilty. And we cannot physically enter heaven to defend ourselves either. But Jesus, who has already paid for our sins on the cross, is there and He is defending us against Satan and even against the accusation of our own sins and the violated Law. With such an Advocate, we may be sure and certain of our security in Christ.

John is charting a middle course between those who claim that they have no sin and those who acknowledge the fact of their sin but do nothing about it or who do not view that fact of sin with any alarm. Both are extreme, unbiblical positions, so John presents the Biblical view.

1g "What if I add to all this, that you have so sinned as to bring a scandal upon the name of God, upon his Church, and upon his cause? Oh! my brother, you may well weep in secret; you may weep tears of blood for having done this; but still, for all that, I cannot shut the gate where God sets it wide open. I have not a thunderbolt for you; if you be a child of God, still mercy is free and still it is preached to you...I wish I could meet the cause of that brother yonder, who has long given up all hope of ever being restored. He has been excommunicated; he has been driven away from the society of the godly...and he has said 'if I must be lost I may as well be lost at once'...Ah! by my brother, you dare not do it with such a text of Scripture as this before your eyes (Charles Spurgeon, "The Sinner's Advocate, in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 9:347-348, sermon 515-516)."

1h "Jesus Christ the righteous" An attribute of Christ, that He is righteous. Everything He does is right and good, and there is no darkness or "double-dealing" in Him. In order for Christ to be righteous, He would also have to be God.

1i "Yes, though we sin, we have him still. John does not say, "If any man sin he has forfeited his advocate," but "we have an advocate," sinners though we are. All the sin that a believer ever did, or can be allowed to commit, cannot destroy his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, as his advocate. The name here given to our Lord is suggestive. "Jesus." Ah! then he is an advocate such as we need, for Jesus is the name of one whose business and delight it is to save. "They shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." His sweetest name implies his success. Next, it is "Jesus Christ"--Christos, the anointed. This shows his authority to plead. The Christ has a right to plead, for he is the Father's own appointed advocate and elected priest. If he were of our choosing he might fail, but if God hath laid help upon one that is mighty, we may safely lay our trouble where God has laid his help. He is Christ, and therefore authorized; he is Christ, and therefore qualified, for the anointing has fully fitted him for his work. He can plead so as to move the heart of God and prevail. What words of tenderness, what sentences of persuasion will the anointed use when he stands up to plead for me! One more letter of his name remains, "Jesus Christ the righteous." This is not only his character but his plea. It is his character, and if the Righteous One be my advocate, then my cause is good, or he would not have espoused it. It is his plea, for he meets the charge of unrighteousness against me by the plea that he is righteous. He declares himself my substitute and puts his obedience to my account. My soul, thou hast a friend well fitted to be thine advocate, he cannot but succeed; leave thyself entirely in his hands. (Charles Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* devotional for October 4)"

1j "A saint is not free from sin- that is his burden; but he is not free to sin- that is his blessing. Sin is in him but his soul is not in sin. A field of wheat may be good and yet have weeds in it (D. L. Moody, *Notes From My Bible*)."

2:2 And he^a is the propitiation^{b-c} for our sins: and not for ours only,^{c-d} but also for the sins of the whole world.^e

2a "And he" Christ. No one else can do anything about the sin problem, not the pope, not any Romanist saint nor the "Virgin Mary". Christ and Christ alone is the propitiation for our sins".

Jesus does not just provide the satisfaction for our sins, but He Himself is the very satisfaction for our sins due to His successful work on the cross for us.

2b "propitiation" is Strong's #2434 'hilasmos hilasmos; to expiate, atonement, the benefit of Christ's blood for the sinner in the acceptance by the Father, appeasing or the means of

appeasing. This Greek word and its English translation only occur elsewhere in 1 John 4:10. Christ is the payment, the atoning sacrifice, for our sins due to the virtue of His work and death on the cross and the application of His blood on the heavenly mercy seat. Christ has paid for our sins finally, totally and for eternity.

The English etymology of "propitiation" comes from two Latin words "pro" before, forward, and "petere" to seek, to fly." The Middle English word, from the Old French, was "propicius". It has the idea of a payment that is due to someone, the appeasing of wrath and conciliating the favor of the offended party. Jesus is our propitiation as He has appeased the wrath of the Father against us by His successful work on the cross and has restored fellowship between man and God.

"propitiation"- uses in other translations (mainly pre-Authorized Version):

1. Wycliffe Bible- "He is the forgiveness for our sins"
 2. Tyndale, Cramner, Geneva Bibles (1557)- "He it is that obtaineth forgiveness for our sins"
 3. Bishop's Bible- "atonement for our sins".
 4. Geneva Bible 1599- "reconciliation"
- The ESV reads as the Authorized Version..

Also see Romans 3:25: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

First Peter 2:24 also gives a good insight to the idea of propitiation: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

2c The word 'propitiation' falls into that group of theological words of 'Biblical vocabulary'. Most of these words end in '-tion'. They deal with salvation, yet each one emphasizes a different truth in salvation... These words are redemption, adoption, reconciliation, regeneration, sanctification, predestination, imputation, justification and remission.

2d "and not for ours only" Not for Christians only, not for John's audience only.

2e The propitiation is as wide as the sin. This also includes those who are not Christians. Christ died for them too. The tragedy if they go to hell is that they went to hell with their sin debt already paid! They never took the payment of Christ on the cross for their sins by faith so the credit He gained for them was never credited to their spiritual accounts. Why is this? Either they never heard a clear presentation of the gospel or they did hear and rejected it. Either way puts them in hell.

But simply because Christ died for the sins of the entire world does not mean that the entire world will be saved. It does mean that the entire world may be saved. Christ died for all men. Thus, all men have access to this salvation that is provided for them. Yet so few men will avail themselves of what has been provided for them by Christ. They hear but will not believe, will not repent, will not accept the gospel. They go to hell with the price of their sins paid but they never accepted that payment and had it applied to their account. So let no Calvinist accuse us of teaching any sort of universalism, for that is as much of a heresy as is limited atonement. Christ died for all, so all may be saved but not all will be saved.

But what will the Calvinist do with this verse? He holds to Calvin's teaching that Christ died only for the elect, not for the non-elect or the reprobate. This is the "L" in the Calvinistic TULIP- limited atonement. Christ did not die for the whole world (despite what John 3:16 or 1 John 2:2 say, among similar verses) but only for the "elect". God only loves the "elect" I suppose then that Christ is the "propitiation" only for the sins of the "elect". But what of "the

whole world?" The Calvinist will interpret this as the "whole world of the elect" but that would be redundant in the light of "and not for our sins only" No, the Calvinist is wrong. Christ died for the ENTIRE world, saved or lost and He is the propitiation for the WHOLE world, saved or lost, not just the elect. Now we certainly do not teach universalism from this in that we believe that everyone is saved or will be saved, including Satan. We never taught such a thing, nor does any Arminian. If a Calvinist tries to throw this up, he is either lying, slandering or ignorant. We do not hold to the heresy of universalism, nor do we hold to the heresy of limited atonement. We hold to the universality of the atonement and that the blood of Christ can be applied to all men through faith. The Calvinist John Gill tries to reinterpret "world" as the "world of Gentiles" (9:622) or the "world of the Jews" (9:623). Anything but believe the text. The Bible is violently forced to conform to his Calvinism instead of having his Calvinism conform to the Bible. A. W. Pink is as guilty when he tries to limit "the world" here to mean only Jewish believers (A. W. Pink, *Sovereignty of God*, page 259).

The Bible clearly teaches that the scope of the propitiation is as wide as the sin. Christ died for all men without distinction and without exception potentially, but that death only does its redemptive work for those who believe. "This is because the Bible clearly differentiates between the universal provision and the individual application of the atonement. The work of Christ is complete but conditional; the atonement is actual but potential (Laurence Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism*, page 428)."

Other verses that clearly teach that the extent of the atonement is universal and not limited are:

1. Isaiah 53:6- All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (not just the "elect".)
2. John 1:29- The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world (not just the sin of the "elect").
3. John 3:16- For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
4. John 4:42- And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.
5. John 6:51- I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.
6. 2 Corinthians 5:14- For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:
7. 2 Corinthians 5:19- To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
8. 1 Timothy 2:4,6- 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (6) Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.
9. 1 Timothy 4:10- For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.
10. 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 honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.
11. 1 John 2:2- And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.
12. 1 John 4:14- And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

The problem with the Calvinist is that every time the Holy Spirit says "world" in the context of salvation, the Calvinist sees "elect" and thus contradicts the words of God.

In the light of these verses, it is clear that the Calvinist teaching of "limited atonement" is totally overthrown by Scripture.

2:3^a And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.^b

3a In 2:3-17, John sets forth 4 signs of fellowship with the Father:

1. The sign of obedience 2:3-5a
2. The sign of imitation 2:5b-6
3. The sign of love 2:12-17
4. The sign of separation from the world 2:12-17

3b This is another test of fellowship and knowledge of the Holy. How do we know that we know God? How do we know if we are truly saved? If we keep His commandments. This is a test of fellowship. What commandments? The moral law of Moses as well as the civil law, as well as any other of the revealed commandments of God. This is not to be limited just to the Ten Commandments. Christians are not accountable to the ceremonial law with its feasts, dietary law or sabbath. But everything else is fair game for the Christian that he is responsible to and for. Some New Testament examples of these commandments that we should be walking in:

1. Galatians 6:2- Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.
2. Matthew 22:36-40- Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
3. James 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:
4. John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.
5. John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.
6. 1 John 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.

A man who hates the law of God cannot claim to be a Christian. A man who is an antinomian cannot claim to be a Christian. A true Christian is a "pronomian", a man who loves the law, promotes the law and orders his life according to the law of God, although he also understands the correct relationship between the law and the Christian in this Church Age.

But we are not going the route of the Seventh Day Adventists, who teach "saved by grace, kept by law". We will never claim that worshipping on Sunday is the mark of the beast or that you shouldn't eat pork chops and ham sandwiches. The ceremonial law was given to Israel, never to any Gentile, and no Gentile (saved or lost) will be judged by his diet or on what day of the week he goes to church. A Jew is accountable to these commandments, especially in the upcoming Tribulation period, as we return to an Old Testament-type of dispensation. This verse could be applied doctrinally to the tribulation, but any attempt to slap it on a Church Age Gentile is going to only cause trouble. We can make a double application, doctrinally, here.

2:4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.^a

4a This reveals the false professor. He claims to be saved but does not keep the commandments of God. He reveals himself to be a rebel at heart who hates the law of God. If

he really loved God and really had the Holy Spirit indwelling him and leading him into all truth, then he would love the law of God and would be doing the best he could to keep the commandments and to order his life according to them. If this reveals a saved man, then the opposite of this reveals an unsaved man, regardless of any profession he may make. The Gnostics claimed to know God in that they professed to have a "superior" knowledge of God through their rites but they did not keep the commandments of God. They thus showed themselves to be liars.

2:5 But whoso keepeth his word,^a in him verily is the love of God perfected:^{b-c} hereby know we that we are in him.

5a Back to 2:3 about identifying the true Christian with respect to the law. You can gauge a true Christian by his relation to the law and his attitude toward it. A positive relation to the law reveals a transformed heart while a negative relation to the law reveals an unsaved heart.

5b Perfect love comes through keeping the commandments and obedience to the Word of God. Perfect love has nothing to do with the doctrine of sinless perfection, seeing how that teaching is a heresy. It simply deals with a love that is as it should be.

5c "perfected" the passive tense shows that we are not perfecting our own love ourselves but rather that someone else is perfecting our love, and that is God, through our right relationship to the truth and our obedience to that truth.

2:6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.^{a-b}

6a Our walk is to match up to our profession. If we claim to be a Christian, then our public walk, ministry and lifestyle had better match up to that profession, else we will reveal ourselves to be a liar and a false professor. We are to walk as Christ walked. He is our guide and pattern. A true Christian will do as much as he can to order his life after the example left to us by Jesus in the days of His flesh. Indeed, this is something that we "ought" to do, since Jesus did it. We "ought" to as well!

6b "I add that if we want to walk as Christ walked, we must have much communion with Him. We cannot possibly get to be like Christ except by being with Him. I wish that we could rise to be so much like the Savior that we should resemble a certain ancient saint who died a martyr's death, to whom the world said, "What are you?" He said, "I am a Christian." They asked, "What trade do you follow?" And he said, "I am a Christian." They inquired, "What language do you speak?" And he said, "I am a Christian." "But what treasures have you?" they asked, and he replied, "I am a Christian." They asked him what friends he had, and he said, "I am a Christian"—for all he was, and all he had, and all he wished to be, and all he hoped to be—were all wrapped up in Christ. If you live with Christ you will be absorbed by Him and He will embrace the whole of your existence! And, in consequence, your walk will be like His walk (Charles Spurgeon, "In Him- Like He Is", *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, sermon 1732)."

2:7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.^a The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

7a John was writing nothing new but rather was reminding us of something old that we may have forgotten. Like a good pastor, John constantly reminds his congregation of these great, old and necessary truths. So these commands to make sure your walk matches your talk and the commandments to keep the commandments are not new but are rather very old.

2:8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you,^a which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

8a Which is the truth in Christ, which we are to obey and keep. We should have a strong desire to walk right and to live a life of obedience because "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." We are out of spiritual darkness! We have been brought into spiritual light! Because of our glorious position in this light, our walk and lives should reflect this high privilege and position.

2:9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.^a

9a Here is another test for salvation. A man who claims he is saved and in the light yet hates his brother (fellow Christian), then is in darkness. The Christian is absolutely forbidden to hate his brother. You may disagree with your brother. You may not get along with your brother. You may be out of fellowship with him. But you are to love him regardless. "But he doesn't love me". Well, prove that you are a better Christian than he is and return love for his hate. A man who hates his brother is in spiritual darkness. If he is saved, he is in a very bad spiritual condition that God will judge.

There is no hatred as strong that which is sometimes exhibited from Christian against Christian. Heathens often treat each other better than Christians treat each other. I have always said that your worst enemies in the Christian life will be other Christians. "The Pagan historian Ammianus (4th century) avowed that 'the enmity of the Christians toward each other surpassed the fury of savage beasts against man' (*Expositors Greek New Testament* 5:176). We see this as some Fundamentalists savagely attack each other over personality issues rather than doctrinal issues. This is wrong. Christians should be treating each other (even if we disagree) better than the heathen. Yet we bite and devour each other because in our own self-righteousness, we assume we are right and that anyone who dares to disagree with us or cross us is wrong.

2:10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light,^a and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.^b

10a On the other hand, a true test of salvation and fellowship is love toward the brethren. Again, you do not necessarily have to be in fellowship with your brother or even get along with him. But you are required to love him.

10b This man who is loving his brother properly will not fall nor will he cause anyone else to fall because of him. The hateful professor of 2:9 is a serious stumbling-block. Consider a professor who vents his spleen against another Christian. What are other Christians to think of it? What is a young Christian, just getting started in the Christian life, supposed to think? What about a sinner? He witnesses this and says to himself "The Christian is no better than I am. I hate but then again, I am a sinner. I thought that Christians were better than me, but it seems that I was

wrong- they are no better!" This man then becomes a stumbling-block both to himself as well as to those around him, and God will also judge that severely.

2:11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.^a

11a This repeats the thought of 2:9 but adds that he is also blind, in addition to being in darkness. He sees nothing spiritually and has no idea where he is or where he is going spiritually. Hate toward a brother blinds the eyes and throws your spiritual compass completely out of whack.

2:12 I write unto you, little children,^{a-b} because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.^c

12a Who are the little children? Young Christians, tender and not too far advanced in the things of God, who are still under teaching and instruction as new Christians. John has a special interest in them. John reminds them that their sins are forgiven. Young Christians sometimes have trouble with assurance and may doubt whether they are truly saved. They realize they continue to sin even after salvation and that causes them to doubt their salvation. But John reminds them of their justified state before God in an attempt to provide them the spiritual comfort and assurance they need.

12b We notice the 4 stages of Christian growth in 2:12-14:

1. **Little children-** (2:12 Strong's #5040 *teknia teknia*) those who are new converts, little children, infants. Spiritually, these and young Christians, just recently saved and starting out on their Christian life.
2. **Little children** - (2:13 Strong's #3813 *paidion paidion*; child, little child, half-grown boy or girl. This is the same English word as in 2:12 but a different Greek word. This is one of those instances where a knowledge of the Greek is essential for a proper understanding of the English text, since the English is not as precise as the Greek is. Spiritually, there are young Christians, who have developed some level of maturity.
3. **Young men-** (2:13 Strong's #3495 *neaniskov neaniskos*; those grown to the prime of life and are no longer children, a youth, a young man, spoken of young men in the prime and vigor of manhood up to the age of 40 or more. Spiritually, this would involve the majority of Christians- not novices, who have been saved some length of time and who have developed some degree of spiritual maturity. They are usually the "ground forces" of the church, who do most of the "leg work" and are often on the front lines of the battle against the enemy.
4. **Fathers-** (2:13 Strong's #3962 *pathr patêr*) a father, ancestor, mentor, model, more mature ones in the Lord. These are the leaders in the Body of Christ, the prophets, the preachers, the ones who write the books and hymns, and lead the way for the rest of us. This accounts for the smallest percentage of believers in the Church but they are very vital as they provide the leadership for the church and also provide examples of how to serve God and how to live the Christian life. "Fathers," again, are men of stability and strength. If burglars are planning to attack a house, they care little about the children and make small account of the boys. But if fatherly men are about, the thieves are not eager for an encounter. Even thus, the arch-deceiver has hope of injuring the Church by deceiving the little children and the young men, but the stalwart men of God, who walk in

the midst of the household, looked up to by everybody, are not so readily blown to and fro. As the Spartans pointed to their citizens as the real walls of Sparta, so do we point to these substantial men as, under God, the bronze walls and bulwarks of the Church!
(Charles Spurgeon, "Fathers in Christ" in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, sermon 1751)."

12c Christ does not forgive our sins for our sake but rather for His own and for the Father's, so that the Father may be glorified. We are saved to glorify God and for His sake, not for us. Now we certainly benefit by this but the ultimate glory in our salvation must go to the Father and not to us. Christ saved me for the Father's sake, not for mine. When we pray for God to save someone, the proper way to make this intercession is for God to save that soul for the Father's sake and glory, not for the sake of the sinner.

2:13 I write unto you, fathers,^a because ye have known him that is from the beginning,^b I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.^{c-d} I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.^e

13a The fathers are the older men in the church who are more mature and provide more of the leadership in the church.

13b They have known the Lord for a long time, longer than the young men. This is one of the foundations for their maturity. The longer you know the Lord, the more mature you should be and the stronger your faith should be and the better your spiritual leadership should be.

13c Young men in their strength, youth and vigor can overcome the wicked one if filled with the Spirit. What an encouragement to young people of our day, who seem to struggle with the truths of Christianity more than any other group. You don't have to be a "father" to overcome the wicked one. A young man can conquer his lusts, sins and all the temptations of Satan if he seeks the power and infilling of the Holy Spirit. Just because a Christian is young is no excuse for him to be carnal or under the domination of Sin.

13d The "wicked one" here is obviously Satan, both personally and his representatives, devils and the temptations of the flesh and the world system. The "wicked one" is he who causes us trials and tribulations, who sends trouble our way with the intent to make us fall.

13e The little children are even younger than the young men. They are just recently saved and have yet to progress very far in the Christian life. But John also gives them the encouragement they need since they have known the Father. Even a man who is a new Christian can know the Father.

2:14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.^a I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome^b the wicked one.^{c-d}

14a This is very similar to that which is written in 2:13. "Him that is from the beginning" is the Father who is Eternal and has no beginning or end.

14b "overcome" This is in the Greek perfect tense, showing this victory is final, complete and cannot be lost or reversed. Their victory is a total one.

14c These young men have accomplished several things:

1. They are strong, both physically and spiritually.
2. The word of God abides in them. Of course, it should indwell all of us who are born again.
3. They have overcome the wicked one.

14d The "wicked one" here is obviously Satan, both personally and his representatives, devils and the temptations of the flesh and the world system. The "wicked one" is he who causes us trials and tribulations, who sends trouble our way with the intent to make us fall.

2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.^{a-b} If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.^c

15a This is the world system. John is not forbidding us to love the world of nature in all of its beauty. After all, God made it and pronounced it all "good" in Genesis 1. But there is that world system, under the control of Satan. R. C. Trench gives a classic definition of "aion", or "world system": "All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculation, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations at any time current in the world, which it may be impossible to seize and accurately define, being the moral and or immoral atmosphere which at any moment we inhale, again inevitably to exhale." This is what we are to hate. The philosophies, opinions and activities of this fallen world is under the control of Satan, since he is the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4). All unsaved men are under the domination of this system and are enslaved to its attitudes. You can see this attitude on television, hear in on radio, read it in magazines 24 hours a day. Basically, it preaches rebellion against God and His Word, and promotes sin, covetousness and all manner of sin and evil. Christians are to separate themselves from these philosophies, thoughts and opinions and rather separate themselves unto godliness and the philosophy that is espoused by the Scripture.

15b A Christian loves not the world, yet he loves all the world. (D. L. Moody, *Notes From My Bible*).

15c You can't love both. You cannot love God and the world. They are diametrically opposed to each other. You cannot face north and south at the same time. You cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24). You may serve God OR mammon. You may love God OR the world but not both. But many try, but they always fail. So many are like Lot- trying to serve God in Sodom. No one has ever figured out how to do this and no man ever will, for it simply cannot be done. If a man has an attraction toward this world system, then he has a defective love toward God. How can you love a world system that hates God, the Bible, His church and all that is holy? Is that not spiritual treason? On what authority may you love God's enemies? We are commanded to love our enemies but not God's enemies. This world system is the enemy of God and we are to declare war on it and fight against it.

2:16 For all that is in the world,^a the lustb of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.^b

16a What makes up this world system?

1. The lust of the flesh. The flesh, our fallen, sinful Adamic nature, is very lustful in its desire for immorality. This is sensual desires of the old nature. It wants to sin sexually and carnally and the world certainly encourages it. The world system is sex-soaked for it

is everywhere (and it is much worse outside of the United States, especially in Europe). They can't even sell a pair of socks without a girl in a bikini. This natural inclination to lust must be controlled by the Holy Spirit for we cannot be holy if we are morally impure.

2. The lust of the eyes. We want what we see, even if we do not need it. We want a bigger house, more money, a better car, a boat, a wide-screen television, and so on—more, more, more, bigger and better! We are never satisfied. Our desires are a bottomless pit. Our desires are as a black hole, sucking in everything that comes into its path. This is covetousness, which is forbidden by the 10th commandment. The world knows how to generate such greed. The television is the best greed-generator we have today. It flashes pictures of things we "have to" have and we begin to lust after them. Once this process has begun, we will usually stop at nothing to possess them, even sinning to obtain them. One way to decrease covetousness in your life is to get rid of the television.

3. The pride of life. This is one of the seven sins that God especially hates (Proverbs 6:17). The world encourages us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. It involves and includes such things as hunting after honors, titles, and pedigrees; boasting of ancestry, family connections, great offices, honorable acquaintance, and the like. How many preachers demand to be called "doctor", even if the title is honorary! The world is always trying to boost your self-esteem and to get you to fall in love with yourself. This is one thing that so-called Christian psychology is always harping on. You are a vile sinner who is in rebellion against God and you are heading for hell but you feel good about yourself! Pride will keep you from salvation because you will refuse to see yourself in a negative light and this will keep you from repentance. Of course, Christians also suffer from this sin, which hinders spiritual growth and fellowship, for God hates pride in His children just as much as He does in the unsaved. These three things in the world are also the three classifications of sins. All sin can be traced back to one of these three problems. You sin because of either lust, pride or covetousness, or even a combination of them.

16b Sin is of the world system and is not of the Father. No sin is of the Father for it is His desire that we sin not (2:1). Rest assured that when we sin, we allowed the world system to overrule the Holy Spirit and we gave into its very strong temptations. And the world system has a very strong pull. After all, we were raised in it and were a part of that "floating mass" before our salvation. It is very hard to break free from something that has so much allure to it. Some Christians never make the complete break. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can hope to make that break. It is only if our love for God is proper that we can make that separation. Only if our love toward God is stronger than our love for the world system can we ever hope to stop loving the world and instead begin to hate it and battle against it as we must.

2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof:^a but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.^b

17a This world system is only temporary. It will not last forever. It will all burn one day as Peter says in 2 Peter 3. God will replace this current evil world system with a divine, godly one in the Millennium for 100 years, and then permanently afterwards.

The things that the world thinks are so important at any given time are soon forgotten. I can remember in my day (I was born in 1964) that the following things were "important"—Watergate, the Olympics, Super Bowls, World Series, Stanley Cups, elections, television programs, movies, the "number one hit on the music charts this week", what some under-talented celebrity did this week, Academy Awards, Grammys, the latest dance craze, etc, etc,

etc. What the world thinks is so important that it should demand your attention will very soon pass away and be totally forgotten. I write these lines in January, 2014. Who remembers what happened in August 2008? 2007? 1997? 1987? No one. The only thing that lingers in the memory for eternity are the things of God, which are the only truly important things on this earth. They never fade away as they are not of the world. Worldly things will all pass away and be forgotten for they will burn. In a thousand years, who will remember Britney Spears, Paris Hilton, Miley Cyrus, the decrees of any pope you care to name, Barack Obama, Ted Kennedy, Super Bowl winners (pick any one of them), who won the American League MVP award, *Star Trek*, and so on? All of this is of the world and will thus pass away. The only important and eternal things are those things that are not of this world but are of the Lord. He that doerh the will of God abideth forever and that includes our spiritual works.

17b The Christian will live forever, even longer than the duration of the world system. Civilizations and cultures are not forever but the Christian will live forever.

This is not limited to a physical existence but also that level of life that Christians should be living. This is "life, and that more abundantly". One can exist and not really live if he is living at a low spiritual level. But the saint can transcend that and live at a level that is "real living". This is only possible through "doing the will of God" in this life.

2:18 Little children, it is the last time:^a and as ye have heard that antichrist^b shall come,^c even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.^d

18a The last days, the time when the world system will lead up to the ultimate unveiling of the Antichrist and the tribulation period. John wrote this either in the 80s or 90s yet things were bad enough then to qualify as being "the last time". Technically, the "last time" or the "last days" began at the start of this current dispensation in Acts 2. This is the last time period before the tribulation period. It will conclude at the rapture. The "last time" primarily deals with the events leading up to the Second Coming, which includes the end of the Church Age and the tribulation period, so we should be careful to look for tribulation applications in this vicinity.

The 'last days' began with the birth of Christ, but it was postponed after Acts 7 when Israel rejected the offer of the kingdom by Stephen. They will resume in the time leading up to the rapture and the signal for it to resume will be the apostasy in the Body of Christ in the days leading up to the rapture.

18b What is an antichrist? The Greek is Strong's #500 *anticristos* antichristos; from *anti* (Strong's #473) instead of or against and *Cristos* Christos (Strong's #5547) Christ, anointed; an opponent of the Messiah, one who usurps the place of Christ. It is one who is in opposition of Christ. It can also mean one who is offered in the place of Christ. The Antichrist will be both. He will oppose Christ but he will also offer himself as another Christ, a substitute Christ, offered in the stead of the Lord Jesus Christ.

18c Thus Nero could not have been the Antichrist, as preterists claim, since Nero was long dead by this writing. Preterists claim that Nero was the Antichrist, the Second Coming was at the Fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, the tribulation is past and we are now living in the Millennium. This absolutely incredible theological abortion cannot work for a variety of reasons. One such reason is that Nero could not have been the Antichrist since he never went to the temple in Jerusalem and declared himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). Also, if the Fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 was the Second Coming (in judgment) and if it was as important as the preterists claim, then why is it that we have no inspired record of it? Why did Luke stop his church history in Acts so soon? Why do we have to go to Josephus, an uninspired Jewish traitor and boot-licker

to the Roman General Titus, to get an account of this event? If it was so important, then why didn't the Lord bother to give us an inspired and reliable account of it? You would think that if it was a literal fulfillment of prophecy and if it was as important as the Preterists claim, then it would have been recorded in Acts. You might as well face it- the Antichrist is yet future and Revelation 4 and onward has yet to be fulfilled.

18d There are "little antichrists" as well as "The Antichrist". Little antichrists transmit the spirit of antichrist and promote it and lay the foundation for the Big Man yet to come. They were in the world in John's day in the same way that we are burdened with them today. This is how we know how close we are to the rapture and second coming. The more antichrists we see, the worse condition we are in, and the closer we are to these grand fulfillments of prophecy.

See appendix 1 at the end of this study for an outline summary of the doctrine of the antichrist.

2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.^a

19a These "little antichrists" are heretics, representative of The Big Antichrist. They are his forerunners. They were orthodox once (not necessarily saved) but are not now. They have fallen away to error to the degree that shows that they were never saved to begin with

2:20 But ye have an unction^a from the Holy one, and ye know all things.^b

20a "unction" is Strong's #5545 *crisma* *chrisma*; an ungent or smearing, the special endowment (chrism) of the Holy Spirit, anointing, unction. This English word is directly related to both "anoint" and "ointment", as well as "ungent" an old word for ointment. All of these words were originally derived from the Latin "ungere", meaning "to anoint". Yet when one is told to do something earnestly, the expression sometimes used is "do it with unction" (Laurence Vance *Archaic Words and the Authorized Version*, page 348). We have this special gift or anointing from the Holy Spirit along the lines of spiritual discernment.

We know the truth and we can spot a heretic and an antichrist. This spiritual discernment that we receive from the Holy Spirit allows us access to all truth, the truth that we need in our daily walks and ministries, to help us discern truth from error and to make the proper decisions.”.

20b “ye know all things” Spiritually, through the revelation and internal illumination of the Holy Spirit. Without His illumination, we would know nothing spiritually, which explains why unsaved people are so ignorant of spiritual truth.

2:21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it,^a and that no lie is of the truth.^b

21a John is writing to mature Christians who know the truth, not to sinners or carnal Christians who do not know the truth.

21b It may seem obvious but it is true. Something is either true or not. If something is not true then it is a lie. A thing that is true cannot be a lie. Lies and truth are mutually exclusive and

cannot be mixed. They cannot co-exist. They are like matter and antimatter. They would destroy each other upon contact.

2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?^a He is antichrist,^b that denieth the Father and the Son.^c

22a This is a test of salvation. If a man denies that Jesus is the Christ, then he is antichrist. He denies that Jesus is the Messiah and the object of the Old Testament messianic prophecies, and that He is the Savior of the world. This man is not saved and any plan of salvation that he offers will lead to hell.

22b antichrist Strong's #500 *anticristos* antichristos; from anti anti (Strong's #473) instead of or against and Cristos Christos (Strong's #5547) Christ, anointed; an opponent of the Messiah, one who usurps the place of Christ. It is one who is in opposition of Christ. It can also mean one who is offered in the place of Christ. The Antichrist will be both. He will oppose Christ but he will also offer himself as another Christ, a substitute Christ, offered in the stead of the Lord Jesus Christ.

22c Another test of salvation is if a man denies the Father and the Son. If he does, then he is an antichrist. Does he deny that Jesus is the Christ? Does he deny that Jesus is God? Does He deny any of the truth about the Father? Then he is an antichrist and also is not saved.

2:23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:^a but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.^b

23a You cannot deny the one and accept the other, since both the Father and the Son are one. If you reject one, you must reject the other. You cannot accept the one without also accepting the other. It is impossible to separate the two.

23b If you accept the one then you must also accept the other, and you will! If you accept the truth about the Father then you will accept the truth about the Son, and vice versa.

2:24 Let that therefore abide^a in you, which ye^b have heard from the beginning.^c If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain^a in you, ye^c also shall continue^a in the Son, and in the Father.

24a "abide...remain...continue" all the same Greek word, Strong's #3306 *menw menô*; to remain, abide, to sojourn, tarry, to continue to be present, to be held, kept, continually, to wait for, await one

24b Emphatic.

24c Let this truth about the Father and the Son dwell in you and remain in you. Keep it and hold fast to it. If you do that, then you will continue in the Son, and in the Father. You will remain orthodox and shield yourself from apostasy and error, and being seduced away from the truth by false teachers.

While a devotional application can certainly be made here, a tribulation application is probably more fitting. Since apostasy is the "unpardonable sin" in the tribulation, the tribulation

saint must accept the truth about Jesus (as preached by the 144,000) all the way to “the end” (Matthew 24:13). If he abandons that truth and casts his lot in with the Antichrist, he “loses it” and is damned. This explains the “if” in this verse. This is obviously not church age doctrine but the doctrinal application here is not to the church age but to the tribulation. Remember, the Bible was not just written for church age Christians, but also for those who will go into and through the tribulation. What word does God have for them? Doctrinally, 1 John is a General Epistle and its application is tribulation, not to the Church Age. There is some Church Age doctrine in the General Epistles but it is mixed in with tribulation applications, so it becomes vital to be able to discern which passage is applying to which dispensation.

2:25 And this is the promise that he^a hath promised us, even eternal life.^b

25a Emphatic.

25b The gift of God is eternal life but it may also be said that the promise of God is eternal life, for this is indeed the ultimate goal of all the promises of God.

2:26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce^a you.^b

26a “seduce” Strong’s #4105 *planaw planao*; to cause to stray, to lead astray, lead aside from the right way, to go astray, wander, roam about, to lead away from the truth, to lead into error, to deceive, to be led into error, to be led aside from the path of virtue, to go astray, sin. The other translations use “deceive” but the King James’ use of “seduce” is better for it shows the nature of false teachers and antichrists, acting as a spiritual harlot to seduce victims away from truth into spiritual fornication.

26b These things include everything that John has written up to this point regarding the tests of salvation and the false teachers that lurk out there, seeking for souls to devour and lead away from Christ and the truth. These false teachers are seducers, like a harlot or a prostitute. Consider the harlot in Proverbs 7 for an example of how this is done. The false prophet/teacher/spiritual harlot/antichrist play on your pride and make you feel like you are the most important person on earth to try to lure you away from Christ and the truth. This means that the false teacher is a spiritual prostitute, as their methods and designs are similar. If your love toward Christ was strong and proper then no type of error could seduce you 3 feet from Christ. But John has warned us of all of this and forewarned is forearmed.

2:27 But the anointing^a which ye^b have received of him abideth in you,^c and ye need not that any man teach you:^d but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

27a “anointing” Anointing was the inaugural ceremony for priests.

27b Emphatic.

27c This is the same as the unction of 2:20. This is what the Charismatics always make such a big deal over, whether they (or someone else) has “an anointing” to preach or minister the Word of God or to something else in the church. But if a person truly had the anointing and the gifts to teach and preach, given to them by the Holy Spirit, wouldn’t it stand to reason that they would

also preach and teach the truth? What sort of an “anointing” is it if the “anointed person” is teaching heresy? Did their “anointing” come from the Holy Spirit or is it of the spirit of antichrist?

27d The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher of truth (John 16:13) although He does give gifted men to the church to be teachers of this truth. But you do not need human teachers to learn truth. All you need to do is to read and believe what is written in the Bible and accept it as the Holy Spirit reveals and applies it to you. But do not despise human teachers! God uses them and they have a vital ministry in the church. We are suspicious of a man who claims that he does not need men and who does not read after any man. Such an attitude may start off Biblical but it does ultimately lead to pride, for you begin to believe that no teacher is good enough to teach you. Many are like this, who crow about not having any "book larnin" but were taught directly from the Lord. Well, if you did not need any man to teach you, then why would anyone else need you to teach them? If no human teacher meets with your approval, then how can you pass muster before another Christian? This super-spiritual attitude can come back around to bite you! Seek out men of God who love God and believe the Book, but do not make them the final authority. The Holy Spirit is the final interpreter and that is where your ultimate confidence should lie.

2:28 And now, little children, abide in him;^a that, when he shall appear,^b we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.^c

28a The command to all Christians to live a holy life and to establish a strong fellowship with the Lord. Abide with Christ and allow Him to abide with you! Fellowship with Him! Make Him the center of your life and ministry. Let us not seek to lead an independent, autonomous life, based on our own wisdom and experience for that will certainly lead to our ruin. The first step in leading a successful life that God will bless is to abide in Christ. All else flows from that.

28b When, not if! He SHALL return. The second coming is a settled fact and John had no doubt about it. The question is always about the timing and the circumstances of the second coming, not the fact of it.

28c We will be judged at the bema judgment immediately after the rapture. We will be judged for our lives and ministries since the time we were saved. Many will be ashamed in this day when they are judged for carnality and coldness. They will have to explain to the Lord all about their sin, disobedience and rebellion. They will see rewards burned up before them due to their unfaithfulness. That will cause shame for it will be done publicly. But those who love the Lord and are faithful and obedient in their lives and ministries will have confidence at the bema and will receive both rewards and commendation from the Lord. They love the Lord and have tried their best to honor and obey Him. So when that time comes for the bema judgment, they have confidence that the Lord will give His stamp of approval on their lives and ministries.

2:29 If ye know that he is righteous,^a ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.^b

29a We know the Lord is righteous. Therefore, everyone who is Christ-like in that they do righteousness are of the same nature and heart as the Lord. These who do righteousness are said to be born of God since they have His seed and nature within them, given them by the Holy Spirit at their conversion. Naturally, no unsaved man will “do righteousness” so this is a visible test and sign for spiritual fruit, to examine a man’s profession.

29b One of these tests as if a man is truly “born of God” is that he will do righteousness, he will do right things. He will not sin not indulge in a continual habit of sinning or doing unrighteous things.

Other uses of the phrase “born of God” in 1 John:

1. 3:9

2. 4:7

3. 5:1

4. 5:4

5. 5:18

1 John Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is the "we know" chapter:

1. We know we shall be like Christ at His coming (3:2).
2. We know He was manifested to take away our sins (3:5).
3. We know that we have passed from death unto life (3:14).
4. We know that no murderer hath eternal life (3:15).
5. We know that we are of the truth (3:19).
6. We know that He abideth in us (3:24).

3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:^{a-b-c} therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.^d

1a John is going to spend this chapter dwelling on the love of God. Look at it! Wonder at it! Study it! Analyze it! Then sit back at wonder at this sort of love that would take a hell-deserving sinner and transform him into a son of God! What sort of love is this? It is not human love for it cannot accomplish such wonders. But it is easily within the realm of divine love.

1b "sons of God" What a high title! No higher title exists for man. Right now are we the sons of God through the new birth. We do not have to wait until we make it to heaven to start enjoying our privileges of sonship. We have them right now in this life and can start enjoying them right now, before we get to heaven.

1c "sons" is not the Greek word "huios" (the legal term for sons) but "teknon", meaning "born children", "bairns" in Scots. We are sons of God because we are born into the family through the new birth.

1d Sonship does not mean deliverance from trials, tribulations and persecutions. If anything, they will multiply because of our divine sonship. The world does not recognize who we are. As they pass us in the streets and the stores and work with us on the job, they do not realize that we are royalty, sons of the Most High God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. They don't know that nor do they care to. "A son of God? So what? Aren't we all?" they reason. This is the stunning inability and unwillingness of the world to recognize or acknowledge Christians for they really are. This is based on their hatred for our Lord and all that He stands for. If the world will not acknowledge Christ as God and Creator, they certainly will not recognize, acknowledge or honor His followers. The world did not know the Son of God when He came among them in a body of flesh. John is clear on this in the first chapter of his Gospel. He came unto His own and His own received him not. They were ignorant of who He was nor did they really want to know. But since the world was in ignorance of the Son of God in their midst in a physical form, we should not be surprised that they do not know who we are. We, as He did, will continue to go through life incognito. But if the world knows not the Father, how shall it know the children?

3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God,^{a-b} and it doth not yet appear what we shall be:^c but we know^d that, when he shall appear,^e we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.^{f-g}

2a Right now, not later or when we get to heaven. If we are born again, then we are sons of God. Salvation is a present-tense possession and experience, not something to be hoped for in the far-off future.

2b "No delay - "now". We do not need to wait till the end: we are now the possessors, the inheritors, of this amazing privilege. No doubt - "are". There is no perhaps, or maybe, about it. We do not just think, or merely hope, we know we are. John wrote his Gospel in order that "ye might have life", (John 20:31). He wrote this Epistle in order that "ye may know that ye have eternal life", (1 John 5:13). Some people say that it is very presumptuous to speak with such certainty; but - which is the more presumptuous, to believe GOD's word, or to doubt it?

No difference - "We". Every real Christian can believe it, whatever little progress in the SPIRIT he may have made, whatever little knowledge of GOD he may have gained. "We" Christians - old and young, wise and foolish, important and insignificant, all of us, because it is not of our merit, or achievement, but entirely of His grace, can count it true that "now are we..." (Guy King, *The Fellowship: An Exposition of First John*.)"

2c We are not now as we shall one day be. Compare the caterpillar to the butterfly that it shall be. The caterpillar does not at all resemble the butterfly, although one day it will be a butterfly. Right now, we are the "caterpillar" as we are in our old, sinful, unredeemed bodies. But one day, at the rapture/resurrection, we shall either be raised or changed, as we will receive our new, glorified, "butterfly" bodies.

2d Look at the use of the word "know" in 1 John 3:

3:2- *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* We can know about our future glorified bodies.

3:5 *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.*

We can know about the work of redemption of Christ on the cross to take away our sins.

3:14 *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* We can know that we have been saved from sin and have been born again.

3:15 *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* We can know that no murderer has eternal life.

3:19 *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* We can know that we are right and that we have the truth and that this truth can be known. That undermines any credibility that any agnostic may profess to have!

3:24 *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.* And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. We can know that we are in fellowship with God.

2e "but we know that, when he shall appear" "When", not "if". The rapture is a settled fact with John as he never speculates about it nor does he engage in any speculation about it.

John also says "we know" that we have a new, glorified body awaiting for us at the rapture. There is no speculation or doubt here. The use of the perfect tense shows John's absolute knowledge and confidence in this.

2f "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Christ is now in a glorified human body, the same as we shall receive. When Christ returns in the rapture, we shall then see Him in that glorified resurrection body. When we see Him in that body, we shall also have that same kind of body at that time.

Our resurrection bodies will be like Christ's in nature. Both will be immortal, sinless and powerful. This does not mean that we will be cookie-cutter cutouts, looking alike as sausages. We will not be image-duplicates (or "Xerox copies") of Christ. Some teachers, like Peter Ruckman, teach that even women will receive male glorified bodies in the resurrection and that we will all resemble a 33-year old male, and appear exactly as Christ in appearance. I see no Scriptural reason to believe this. The Bible does not lend itself to such interpretations but rather allows us to hold that we will retain our physical distinctiveness, as well as our personal individualities, in our glorified bodies. We will be like Christ in nature, not in appearance! He is now glorified and in heaven, as the Son of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This is how we will see Him. We will not see Him as He was. We will not see Him as the baby, as the meek and lowly one, one who was despised and rejected and acquainted with grief. We shall not see Him bruised and beaten as He was on Calvary, nor shall we see Him as He was in death. All that is over and done and past, never to be repeated. We shall see Him but only in His glory, not in His humiliation.

What will this new body be like?

1. It will be sinless.
2. It will be immortal.
3. It will be able to travel between earth and heaven instantaneously
4. It will be a body of power.
5. It will be able to pass through solid objects.
6. It will be fitted for heaven and eternity.
7. It will have none of the physical limitations that our current bodies have. We may eat (as Christ did after His resurrection) but we will not have to.
8. We will still be able to eat, but because we want to, not because we have to.
9. The current laws of thermodynamics will not apply to our glorified body as they currently apply to our physical body. Our current body is running down, breaking down and dying. Our glorified body will not as it is fashioned after Christ's glorified body. No more getting tired or worn out!

And who knows what else that has not been revealed to us about it?

2g "We shall never see him thus; Bethlehem's glories are gone for ever; Calvary's glooms are swept away; Gethsemane's scene is dissolved; and even Tabor's splendours are quenched in the past. They are as things that were; sponge, the nails— these are not. The manger and the rocky tomb are gone. The places are there, unsanctified by Christian feet, unblessed, unhallowed by the presence of their Lord. We shall never see him as he was. In vain our fancy tries to paint it, or our imagination to fashion it. We cannot, must not, see him as he was; nor do we wish, for we have a larger promise, "We shall see him as he is." Come, just look at that a few moments by way of contrast, and then I am sure you will prefer to see Christ as he is, rather than behold him as he was (Charles Spurgeon, "The Beatific Vision" *The New Park Street Pulpit*, Sermon 61)."

3:3 And every man that hath this hope in him^a purifieth^b himself, even as he is pure.^c

3a The "blessed hope" of Titus 2:13. Not "I sure HOPE I'm saved and that I'll make it to heaven." The hope both John and Paul are talking about is the hope of the second coming and our receiving our glorified bodies. We are still hoping for it because, while it is a settled thing in our hearts, it has not yet happened.

3b The pre-Authorized Version translations all use "purges", as in purging himself from sin.

3c This is what the doctrine and hope of the Second Coming is designed to do for us. Since we shall soon see Him and stand before Him in the bema judgment, we want to make sure that we are always ready to do so. We want to make sure that all sin is confessed and that we are living pure and holy lives at all times since we do not know when we may be whisked out either in death or the rapture, to stand before Christ at the bema judgment to give an account of our lives and ministries since our salvation. Thus a man with a proper understanding and acceptance of the Second Coming will be striving to live a pure life at all times.

3:4 Whosoever committeth sin^a transgresseth also the law:^b for sin is the transgression of the law.^{c-d}

4a "whosoever committeth sin" 'The phrase 'to do sin' regards sin as something actually realized in its completeness. He that 'does sin' realizes in action 'the' sin, that which includes and represents the complete ideal of sin (Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 2:346)."

4b The Tyndale and Coverdale Bibles don't include the idea of "transgressing the law". They both use "committeth unrighteousness" which is technically correct, but the later translations expand this to transgressing the law. The ESV also omits any idea of transgressing the law. In order for there to be sin, there must be a law to be violated.

4c This defines sin. Sin is a transgression of the law of God. When we violate any of the law of God, then we are guilty of sin. It is a deliberate "stepping over the line" that God has set for us not to cross over. You will never see a better definition of sin that this, no matter how men and theological systems try to twist this definition.

4d There are three classifications of law:

1. **The civil law**, embodied in the case laws. These provide the judicial foundation for Israel. Violation of this law is a sin for God still speaks through human governments and expects all nations to govern themselves through Biblical Law. Thus, violations of this law can be on a national level, and God does judge nations that violate His law.

2. **The moral law**, summarized in, but limited to, the Ten Commandments. These are the personal sins that we would be guilty of in our own lives. These Ten Commandments, with the exception of the 4th (the Sabbath, which is ceremonial and dispensational) are still binding on Christians today.

3. **The ceremonial law**, which includes the Sabbath, the feasts, dietary laws and priest laws. These were given to Israel as a part of their worship and service to God, but are not binding on Christians or their worship.

To violate these laws is sin. To break a ceremonial law is not a problem for the church today since Christians are not under the ceremonial law but the moral and civil laws are still very much binding on Christians today and we are still responsible to them.

3:5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins;^a and in him is no sin.^b

5a This is why Christ came into the world and was manifested in the Incarnation- to take away our sins, as He has done at the cross.

5b Christ was and still is sinless. He did no sin and could do no sin because He is God. We hold to the impeccability of Christ, that He could not sin and that He never sinned. He had no fallen human nature. Christ was born with a perfect human nature, like Adam was created with, before he fell. This is why the doctrine of the virgin birth is so necessary. If Christ had a human father and if He came into the world as everyone else, He would have been born with a fallen human nature that He would have received from Joseph. But since He bypassed human procreation and had no human father, Christ did not receive this nature. It is not the mother than transmits the fallen nature, it is the father. Since Christ had no human father, He escaped inheriting this sinful nature. Deny the virgin birth and you will, by extension, make Christ a sinner, and you would attack this great truth in this verse.

3:6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth present not:^a whosoever sinneth hath not seen^b him, neither known^b him.^c

6a Again, it is possible not to sin. This is possible when we are abiding in Christ. If we are in Christ, filled with the Spirit and abiding in Him then we will not sin because the new, divine nature that has been implanted in us at salvation is in control. Sin comes when we are no longer abiding in Christ, when the old, fleshly nature, is in control. When we are in Christ, we do not sin. When we are out of Christ, we cannot help but sin. But John does not hold to sinless perfection, since he talks about the provision for the sin of the believer in 1:9-2:1.

6b "seen"... "known" Both verbs are in the perfect tense, showing they have an absolute meaning. This sinner absolutely does not know God, nor has he seen God. There is no wiggle room in these declarations.

6c The sinning here is not a one time, sporadic sin, but is the continual, habitual practice of sin. He who lives in a habitual, continual practice and attitude of sin is not in Christ, has not seen Him nor knows Christ. This is language to describe an unsaved man. Christians are to be not slaves to sin. If they are, something is very wrong. Either they are not abiding in Christ and are backslidden and carnal, or are simply not saved at all.

3:7 Little children, let no man deceive you:^a he that doeth righteousness^b is righteous, even as he is righteous.^c

7a Let no man deceive regarding these revealed truths. The threat of seduction by false teachers and prophets is a constant danger. All of us must be on guard against error and those who spread it.

7b Strong's #1343 *dikaiosune* *dikaiosunê*; equity, justification, justice. In the Greek classics there appears an eternal, divine, unwritten principle of right, dwelling in the human consciousness, shaping both the physical and the moral ordering of the world, and personified as Themis. This divine ordering requires that men should be shown or pointed to that which is according to it- a definite circle of duties and obligations which constitute right. It has a both religious and secular understanding. Each man stands in direct and primary relation to the holy God as He is by the law of His own nature. Righteousness is union with God in character. Plato designated "*dikaiosune*" (Strong's #1343) as inseparably linked with *sophrosune* (Strong's #4997), soberness or sobriety, the expression of a sound mind, the ability to place restrictions on one's freedom in action.

7c A righteous man does righteousness because he is righteous. This only makes sense. An unrighteous man does unrighteousness because he is unrighteous. A man is as he does. A man is as the fruit he produces in his life. A man's fruit is as his seed is. An unrighteous man will not do righteousness, just as a righteous man will not do unrighteousness, unless he backslides and starts to walk in his flesh.

3:8 He that committeth sin is present of the devil;^a for the devil sinneth^b from the beginning.^c For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy^d the works of the devil.^e

8a This is the part of us that sins is the sinful part of our nature that we inherited from Adam. There is that part of our nature that is of the devil and this is the old, fallen nature. When we sit, we sin through that nature. The new, divine nature of the Christian is not responsible for sin nor does it sin. But the devilish part of our nature, that which is of Satan, is responsible for our sin and it is that which is responsible for our sins.

8b The verb is in the present tense, showing that Satan is still sinning and hasn't stopped, nor will he ever stop.

8c There was a time when there was no devil. There was a time when Lucifer was a loyal and obedient cherub (not angel- Lucifer was never an angel), covering the throne of God. But something happened one day in the distant, pre-human past when ambition and envy crept into his nature and he desired to overthrow the very throne of God and have himself installed instead. From that day, Lucifer became Satan, the devil. It was sin that caused Lucifer to fall and become Satan. But Satan "sinneth from the beginning", showing that since his fall, Satan does nothing but sin. It is the very essence of his nature and he can do nothing else but sin. Nor can he stop sinning, for that would require a fundamental change in his nature that is not going to take place.

8d The Tyndale and Coverdale Bibles use "loose", which is one definition of the Greek word "luo", which is usually translated "destroy".

8e The incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ all serve this purpose- to destroy the works of Satan. Since the work of Jesus is complete, finished and successful, Satan's works are doomed to ultimate and utter defeat. It has yet to take place but Satan is as good as defeated since he cannot cope with nor defeat or undo the redemptive work of Christ on the cross.

3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;^a for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.^b

9a This speaks of the Christian who is abiding in Christ and who is allowing his divine nature to control his life. We cannot sin when we are in such a spiritual condition. Sin only becomes possible when we are out of spiritual fellowship with Christ, are not abiding in him and are not being controlled by the divine nature but are rather under the control of our sinful, fallen natures we received from Adam.

9b What is this seed? It refers to that divine nature, that "divine deposit" that the Holy Spirit places within every born again Christian (1 Peter 1:23) that cannot sin because it is holy, sinless

and from God. Technically, the Christian cannot sin because he is supposed to be always filled with the Spirit and under the control of this divine nature. Sin only becomes possible when we are not allowing ourselves to be controlled by this divine nature.

This is the second use of this phrase “born of Him” or “born of God” which lists the distinguishing characteristics of one who has been genuinely born again (the other uses are in 2:29; 4:7; 5:1,4,18).

3:10 In this the children of God are manifest,^a and the children of the devil:^{b-c} whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.^d

10a Sin and love are the ways to manifest the children of God and the children of the devil. He who loves is of God, he who hates is of the devil. He who sins is of the devil, he who does not sin is of God. It's that simple. John also brings in the matter of doing righteousness as a way to discern a child of God and a child of Satan. Whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. But turn it around. He that does righteousness and loves his brother is of God.

10b The only other place this phrase is used is in Acts 13:10. John 8:44 also refers to this.

10c There are only two classifications of men:

1. Children of God- the saved
2. Children of Satan- the unsaved

10d “An unlovely spirit is also self-condemnatory as being an unholy spirit; in fact, want of love is want of righteousness. There are some who profess to be so righteous that they condemn everybody else, and they have no bowels of compassion for those who are suffering in consequence of their fault. But oh, beloved, it is one thing to hate sin, and it is another thing to hate the sinner! Let your indignation burn against everything that is evil; but still, towards him who has done the wrong have ever the gentle thought of pity, and for him present the prayer that he may leave his sin, and turn unto his gracious God. It may be difficult to reach this point; but there should always be just that happy mixture in the mind and heart of the child of God, — love to the sinner and hatred of his sin (Charles Spurgeon).”

3:11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.^a

11a The message that we have heard from the beginning is love, that we should love each other. Love toward God and the brethren on our behalf is the major theme of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

3:12 Not as Cain,^a who was of that wicked one,^b and slew his brother.^c And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.^d

12a Cain is the example of a wicked man, a child of Satan, who hated his brother and did not righteousness. This is the only Old Testament account that John makes reference to in his epistles.

12b "who was of that wicked one" Cain was a follower of Satan and was wicked because of it. He was in league with Satan in his thoughts and actions, as well as his "vegetable stand religion". His love toward God was weak and imperfect and it led him to fall away from the truth and commands of God and follow unrighteousness.

12c Abel in Genesis 4. "Slew" is Strong's #4969 *sfazo sphazô*; to butcher, to slaughter, to maim, kill, slay (in sacrifice), wound, to cut the throat. This signifies a violent death. It was used in classical Greek of slaughtering victims for sacrifice by cutting the throat, or of any slaughter by knife or sword. It is used in the Septuagint of the slaying of the Levitical sacrifices (Leviticus 1:5). Cain killed Abel by slicing his throat. Was this in response to Abel's method of killing the lamb that he used in his sacrifice? Abel killed his sacrifice by cutting its throat so Cain does the same thing to Abel in his hatred and jealousy. This word only occurs here and in Revelation 5:6,9,12; 6:4,9; 13:3,8 and 18:24.

12d Why did Cain murder Abel? Jealousy is certainly a factor, since Abel was righteous and was accepted by God while Cain's offering was rejected. This rejection by God of Cain's offering was bad enough to hurt Cain's ego, but to see God accept his younger brother over him and instead of him was just too much for Cain to take, so he murdered his brother out of both jealousy and hatred.

3:13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.^a

13a Cain hated Abel. Pharaoh hated Moses. Esau hated Jacob. Judas hated Christ. This is an immutable law of Scripture and history, that the wicked hated the righteous. Why? Because the righteous are accepted of God but the wicked are not. They have the blessing of God that the wicked do not have. This causes the wicked to hate the righteous because of jealousy. And we are not to marvel if the world hate us. The world is supposed to hate us if we are righteous. They hated Christ. Are we to expect any better treatment from a fallen world system under the control of Satan? Satan is the god of this age and it is under his control. Satan hates God and by extension, his children. Since the age is under the control of Satan, it also hates God and His sons. If we are righteous and godly, we serve as a constant rebuke and testimony against the sinner and they cannot stand that. Instead of repenting and conforming to righteousness, the wicked harden themselves and respond harshly and negatively against the godly and seek to kill them to remove the source of this moral irritation.

In a tribulation application (since 1 John is a "General" Epistle, not a Church Epistle), the tribulation Jew and remnant Gentile saint (who has not taken the mark of the beast) will be hated of all men for Christ's sake. Don't be surprised by that! This is a warning for the tribulation saint to have the bowels of hell vomited out of him. We see a foretaste of that today as the world and the apostate church vents its spleen against Bible believing Christians today. It will be much, much worse after the rapture.

3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.^a He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.^b

14a Love is a test of salvation. If we love the brethren, then we know and have the assurance that we are truly born again. And we can know these things. We can have the assurance that we are born of God. God does not suffer agnostics, who take pride in their ignorance of spiritual truth. If a man does not know he is saved then he probably isn't, because the Holy Spirit would witness to him the assurance if he was.

We also have a definition of salvation- passing from (spiritual) death to (spiritual) life, passing from the death penalty of an eternity of hell to the gift of eternal life.

14b This is just the opposite. A man who loves God and his neighbor has the assurance of eternal life. But a man who may even claim to be saved yet hates his brother is in death. He is not saved. The moral is clear- to be saved, you must love your brother. If you hate your brother, you are not saved. Hate-filled men know nothing of the grace of God and any profession they make of salvation is not to be believed until they begin to manifest some fruits of salvation, namely love toward the brethren that they originally hated.

3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:^{a-b} and ye know that no murderer^b hath eternal life abiding in him.^{c-d}

15a Like Cain. He hated Abel and ended up murdering him. This is what hate will do. You would kill the man who hates if you could, but you may be unable to. You would if you could. Murder starts in the heart with hate that is allowed to grow and ferment. The man who hates is capable of murder and he would if he could get the chance and if he could get away with it.

But we have a problem here. The object of this hatred is a “brother”. Thus, it cannot apply to an unsaved man for he has no “brethren”. The hater has to be a believer, hating another brother, resulting in the hater being a “murderer”. But since a Christian can’t lose his salvation (since no murderer hath eternal life), the application here must be tribulational. Since there are no Christians in the tribulation, the “hater” must be a Gentile hating a Tribulation Jew (Matthew 25:40).

15b The pre-Authorized Version translations use “manslayer”. There is a difference between manslaughter and homicide. Both are murder, but manslaughter is like an accidental death or one caused by negligence, not by malice or with any forethought. The Authorized Version does not make this distinction and the Greek word doesn’t either.

15c The hater is no better than the murderer because the man who hates is a mental murderer. He has already committed murder in his heart. If he continues to nurse that hate then it is only a matter of time until he commits the physical act of murder.

15d There is a real doctrinal problem here. If this applies to Christians in the Church Age, how can a saved man “abide in death” and not have “eternal life abiding in him”? Was he a Christian and then lost his salvation? That is not Church doctrine. As usual, if we hit a verse whose doctrinal application doesn’t match up with the doctrines expressed in the Pauline Epistles, then the doctrinal application is not to a Christian or to the Church Age. While sinful, a Christian may “hate” a man who is a “brother” but that would not cause him to lose his salvation. If the doctrinal application makes no sense to Church Age doctrines, the application must lie in another dispensation, in this case, the tribulation. The “brother” is a Jew (Matthew 25:40, another tribulation reference). Not every Jew is going to “endure to the end” (Matthew 24:13) or resist the Antichrist. Some will compromise and take the mark. These apostate Jews will persecute the faithful Jewish remnant, too. This has happened before, as some Jews in the Nazi concentration camps during World War II turned on other Jews in order to avoid the gas chambers. Since there is no eternal security in the tribulation (Matthew 24:13 again), a Jew (or a believing Gentile) can “lose it” if he falls away, takes the mark and/or turns away from the truth. Any professing tribulation believer (Jew or Gentile) who turns against his “brother” will forfeit his salvation (if he was saved at all!) as surely as if he took the mark of the beast.

3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us:^a and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.^b

16a How do we know that God loves us? Because He laid down His life for us on the cross. There is no greater love than that a man lay down his life for his friends. Christ gave the ultimate expression of love for fallen mankind by dying in the place of all mankind so that through that death, sinful man could be delivered from that fate.

1. How great my sins must have been to require the very death and blood of God to pay for them!
2. How great His love must be for me for Him to be willing to die the necessary death, with its suffering, to save me!
3. How secure I must be in His salvation. If I were to be lost, then such a death and suffering would be wasted!

16b This is the ultimate way that we could show our love for the brethren, if we were willing to lay down our lives for them. We may never be called upon to do it but if we were and did, there would be no greater way to express our love toward the brethren than by being willing to pay the highest and ultimate sacrifice. But Christ's love is even greater than this because John says we ought to lay down our life for the brethren but Jesus laid down His life for His enemies! There is no higher expression of love than that!

3:17^a But whoso hath this world's good,^b and seeth his brother^c have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?^d

17a John reads like James (especially chapter 2) in verses 17 and 18. Those who try to create a contradiction between James and Paul (and fail at it) never stop to think that John echoes James here. Is John also against Paul? And why is Paul so careful to stress good works in the Pastoral Epistles, especially in Titus? This is because there is no contradiction between James and Paul any more than there is between James and John. Here, John is very similar to James 2:15,16 and both verses have clear tribulation applications.

17b It is no sin to be rich and have this world's goods. We are not going to say that being poor is a virtue and being rich is sinful for that is obviously never the case. The issue comes in how that wealth (or poverty!) is used. Is it wasted on self and selfish things, or is it used to promote the gospel and to relieve poor and needy saints?

17c "his brother" John is limiting this to saints helping saints, not saints helping sinners. We should help the brethren before we help the devil's children.

17d John is still dwelling on manifesting love. One way we manifest our love toward the brethren is by being willing to lay down our lives for them (2:16). Another way is by helping them when they have need. If we see that our brother has a need that we are able to fulfill and we do not seek to ease his need, then we really do not love our brother. If we did, we would have done something to help. True love wants to help and to relieve suffering. The man who engages in good works then is a man who truly loves his neighbor, but the man who shuts up his bowels of compassion has no love or a very weak and cold love toward the brethren. He has very definite spiritual problems.

3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.^a

18a John continues to sound like James 2:5-7, which is not surprising since both are General Epistles with a lot of Tribulation applications. Loving in word is cheap for it costs you nothing. Anyone can talk about love and can even lie about it with their tongue. Instead of merely talking about love (and trying to convince people that we really do love simply by our words), let's put that love that we profess to have into action and show people by our works that we really do love. Actions always speak louder than words, especially when one is trying to manifest love.

3:19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.^a

19a This is true by our putting our love into action. That is how we know that we are of the truth and that our hearts are right before Christ, if we love the brethren and put our love toward them into action by good works.

3:20^a For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

3:21^a Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

20a 21a This can happen if we feel that our works or love are not perfect toward God or if we think that our works or love do not measure up to God's standards. They never will! But God knows our hearts and our motivations better than we do. We condemn ourselves daily but God knows better. He would reward us because he knows our heart and our motivation. The godly man is always criticizing himself, condemning himself for not doing enough or because he believes that his love is not perfect or his heart is not right. The righteous man, because he knows exactly what he is and where he came from, will loathe himself and his service. The unrighteous man will never do this. He gets rather pleased with himself and thinks he is doing alright and that God is pleased with him. Here is how you can tell a righteous man from an unrighteous, proud man. The righteous man has a very low opinion of himself while the proud, unrighteous man thinks very highly of himself. But God judges us on a different scale than we judge ourselves. He, not us, is the final judge of our lives and ministries. What a surprise it will be in that day for the righteous and unrighteous man! The righteous man expects a chewing out by the Lord but is actually commended, while the unrighteous man, who is expecting commendation, is rebuked by God for his pride! And that is exactly how it will turn out at the bema judgment!

3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.^a

22a What are some requirements of answered prayer?

1. We keep his commandments. A rebel or an antinomian has no reason to expect anything from God. Why should he? He hates God because he hates the law of God. If he really loved God then he would love the law that God gave and would not try to worm his way out of his responsibility toward it. Obedience is a key that opens the door of prayer.

2. We do those things that are pleasing in his sight. This is an outgrowth of obedience and love toward the law of God and the person of God. Doing the law and the will of God will give us a basis for answered prayer.

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.^a

23a This summarizes our Christian duty. Belief in Christ and love toward the brethren are commandments of God that we must obey and do (3:22) in order to have answered prayer.

3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him,^a and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us,^b by the Spirit which he hath given us.^c

24a The obedient man who loves God and His law dwells in God and vice versa. A strong, deep and intimate fellowship exists between him and the Lord. There is no other way to develop a relationship with the Lord than through obedience to and the doing of His law and commandments.

24b We know this if we keep and obey His commandments.

24c Let God be a home to you and you be the home of God. Abide in God and let God abide in you.

1 John Chapter 4

4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit,^a but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.^{b-c}

1a Everyone will claim to be a man of God and every theological system will claim to be the truth. Don't be so naive or gullible as to think that every preacher is a man of God. The simpleton will believe every word and perish in the process. There are many false teachers and prophets out there and you need to develop the spiritual discernment to identify them. Every time a new doctrine comes down the pike, you are to test it to see if it is from God. Not everything that claims to be of God really is. Naturally, every preacher and doctrine claims to be of God and represents the truth but that cannot be. Both Calvinism and Arminianism claim to be the truth but they both cannot be right (if either is right to begin with!). It is your responsibility to use the Scripture and the spirit of discernment from the Holy Spirit to judge all men and movements. Yes, judge them! You are allowed to. Don't be so hyper-sensitive and thin-skinned to whine about "judge not". We are commanded to try these spirits to see if they are from God. If they are, we are to embrace it. If not, they are to be rejected. But how are we to tell between truth and error if we do not judge? We dare not accept any and all men and doctrines, refusing to judge or warn against the wrong ones. If we fail to judge and warn, then we can end up embracing a heresy.

1b They are multiplying with every passing day and will continue to at a greater rate as we approach the end of the age.

1c This verb is in the perfect tense meaning that these false prophets have gone out into the world with full dedication and they have no intention of coming back, or in changing their activities or in modifying their message. They know exactly what they are doing and are entirely dedicated to their hellish mission to destroy souls and line their purses in the process. What they do they do not do in ignorance but with a full malicious intent.

4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth^a that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:^b

2a Used commonly in Classical Greek for "to promise, to agree with or consent with the desire of another."

2b How do you tell if a man, spirit or doctrine is of God? John says "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God". If a man is orthodox in his Christology then he is of God. Now that does not mean that you will agree with everything he preaches. He can be a postmillennialist and still be of God for John does not make eschatology the basis for truth. He may hold to infant baptism or Calvinism or Plymouth Brethren-type church government and still be of God for these doctrines are not the touchstone of truth. If a man says that Jesus came in the flesh in the incarnation and was really a man while on earth, then he is of God.

4:3 And every spirit that confesseth^{2a} not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is^a not of God:^b and this is that spirit of antichrist,^c whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is present it in the world.^d

3a "Christ is come in the flesh" is missing in modern versions, including the ESV, which denies the incarnation. This would be a gnostic heresy that has crept into the critical texts and modern versions.

3b False teachers stumble on this doctrine. They do not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Somewhere in their theology they deny the truth of the incarnation and its associated doctrines. Below is a list of examples:

1. **Jehovah Witnesses** clearly deny the incarnation. They are modern-day Arians. They deny His deity, resurrection, atoning death and literal second coming.

2. **Mormonism** is not of God because it too has a screwed-up Christology, which is a result of their fusing of Christianity with freemasonry. They teach that Jesus and Lucifer were brothers and deny the Biblical teaching of the virgin birth as well as the atoning death of Christ.

3. **Christian Science** (which is neither Christian nor scientific) is even worse in its denial of orthodox Christology. They deny the virgin birth, the atonement, the deity of Christ, the death and resurrection of Christ and His second coming.

4. **The Unification Church** is also guilty, in proclaiming that Jesus failed in His work on the cross and that Sun Myung Moon had to complete Christ's work. It is obvious that Moonies do not confess Christ. Hopefully it will wane since Moon died a number of years ago.

The moral is that if your doctrine of Christ is unorthodox, then you are not orthodox. Even worse, that doctrine or preacher is actually promoting the spirit of antichrist. If it is not Christ then it is antichrist, something opposed to Christ or something offered as a substitute of the doctrine of Christ. If a man raises a question or a doubt about the deity or incarnation of Christ, dismiss him and listen no longer.

"Here he gives them the general rule, both affirmative and negative, which would suffice them to judge by in their present case; this being the great controversy of that time with the Jews, Whether Jesus were the Messiah? and whether the Messiah were as yet come or no? and with the Gnostics, Whether he were really come in the flesh, in true human nature? or were not, as to that appearance, a mere phantasm? (Matthew Poole, 3:937)."

3c "antichrist" Strong's #500 *anticristov* antichristos; from *anti* anti (Strong's #473), against or in place of, and *Cristov* Christos (Strong's #5547), Christ, the Anointed One; the adversary of the Messiah. It is one who is in opposition of Christ. It can also mean one who is offered in the place of Christ. The Antichrist will be both. He will oppose Christ but he will also offer himself as another Christ, a substitute Christ, offered in the stead of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3d The spirit of antichrist is nothing new. It was in the world in John's day. How much worse is it now, 1900 years later? It was in the world in John's day and is still with us today. It's here, setting the table for the person of the antichrist to make his appearance and start his "ministry".

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

4a "Ye are of God, little children" Because they have been born again. They are "little children" because they are saved and God is their Father. No unsaved man is a child of God.

All the other translations reverse the word order to "Little children, ye are of God". The Authorized Version has the correct word order but that is not really an important issue in this verse as reversing the word order does no harm.

4b "and have overcome them" Through faith and the blood of Christ, not through their own strength, scholarship or spirituality.

4c The Holy Spirit, who indwells Christians, is greater than the spirit of antichrist that is in the world. The Spirit in us is greater and more powerful than the spirit of antichrist that is in the world. There is none greater than He since the Holy Spirit is God!

4:5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.^a

5a The unsaved are in the world and are a product of it. Since their thought process is dominated by this fallen world system and since they are a product of this world system, then we would naturally expect them to speak of the things concerning this world system. We cannot expect a polluted well to bring forth pure water. We cannot expect worldly people to speak of divine things. In regards to the false teachers, this fallen, Satanic world system, which they are a part of, is the source of their doctrines. So when someone takes a doctrine because "everyone believes it" or because "everyone says so-and-so", that is no basis to believe it.

4:6 We are of God:^a he that knoweth God heareth us;^b he that is not of God heareth not us.^c Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.^{d-e}

6a "We are of God" Because we have been born again by placing our faith in Christ. And notice John's certainty about it- we ARE of God, not "maybe" or "hope to be".

6b "he that knoweth God heareth us" We are of God. If you hear us and accept our message and ministry then you are also of God. A worldly person would not accept such a ministry since we are operating on two entirely different wavelengths- his earthly and ours heavenly. If we are not on the same frequency then we cannot communicate.

6c "he that is not of God heareth not us." For the reasons that we have stated above.

6d "Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." How? By seeing who listens to what. If a spirit, doctrine or teaching is popular with the unsaved then it is the spirit of error. If it is unpopular with the lost but embraced by the Christian, then it is the spirit of truth. A Christian will not receive error while an unsaved man would not accept truth.

6e "spirit of error" This phrase occurs only here in Scripture.

4:7 Beloved, let us love one another:^a for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God,^b and knoweth God.

7a "Beloved, let us love one another" Reasons given for this command:

1. "For love is of God". Love comes from God. If we are of God then we ought also to share this characteristic. A failure to love reveals that we do not really know God.
2. "Every one that loveth is born of God" Love is the distinguishing characteristic of the true Christian.
3. "And knoweth God." We know that we indeed know God if we love as He does and loves those whom He loves.

7b This is the third use of this phrase “born of Him” or “born of God” which lists the distinguishing characteristics of one who has been genuinely born again (the other uses are in 2:29; 3:9; 5:1,4,18). Here, a mark of one who has truly been born again is that they will love the brethren with a true and genuine love. This person will hate none of those who are truly born of God, even if he doesn’t always get along with them.

4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God;^a for God is love.^b

8a "He that loveth not knoweth not God" But the unsaved cannot love as God for he is not of God, does not have the spirit of God in him, nor is he born of God. Only the Christian can love as God does.

8b "for God is love." This is an attribute of God. God not only loves, He is love. You must know God then in order to love properly for God is love. If you don't know God then you do not know love. His very nature and essence is love. If there was no God then there would be no love. The Greek nouns in the phrase "God is love" are not interchangeable because the definite article occurs with "God" but not with "love". To make them reversible would offer a basis for pantheism, "Love is God". Mary Baker Eddy, the matron of the Christian Science cult did this, which is one reason why that cult is so heretical.

4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten^a Son into the world,^b that we might live through him.

9a "begotten" is missing in modern versions, including the ESV.

9b The incarnation of Christ is the ultimate manifestation of God's love toward us. Without the incarnation and virgin birth, there would have been no cross and no redemption. The incarnation made our salvation possible.

4:10 Herein is love,^a not that we loved God,^b but that he loved us,^c and sent his Son^d to be the propitiation^e for our sins.^f

10a Here is the definition of love in the truest sense. Do you wish an example and a definition of love in its highest form? Then consider the Father sending His Son to deal with the sin problem of man once and for all in the matter and circumstance in which He did. Every other definition of love fails in comparison.

10b "not that we loved God" We do not know how to properly love God. We, as sinners, cannot love Him properly, so our love toward God is not significant in our relationship to Him. Our spiritual presupposition does not begin with our love toward God. That is not its starting point.

10c "but that he loved us" This is the starting point in God's dealing with us. He loved us. We start with that in our theology. That is more important than our loving Him.

10d “God sent such a One— He “sent His Son.” If men send an embassy to a great power, they select some great one of their nation to wait upon the potent prince. But if they are dealing with a petty principality, they think a subordinate person quite sufficient for such a business.

Admire, then, the true love of the infinitely gracious God, that when He sent an embassy to men, He did not commission an angel nor even the brightest spirit before His Throne, but He sent His Son— oh, the love of God to men! He sent His equal Son to rebels who would not receive Him, would not hear Him, but spat upon Him, scourged Him, stripped Him, slew Him! Yes, “He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all.” He knew what would come of that sending of Him and yet He sent Him! (Charles Spurgeon, “Herein is Love”, Sermon 2448).”

10e "Propitiation" See notes under 2:2. "The English word 'propitiate' means 'to appease and render favorable. That was the pagan meaning of the Greek word. The pagan worshipper brought gifts to his god to appease the god's wrath and make him favorable in his attitude toward him. But the God of Christianity needs no gifts to appease His wrath and make Him favorable towards the human race...His wrath against sin cannot be placated by good works (Kenneth Wuest, *In These Last Days*, page 165)."

It should be remembered that God sent His Son not to be the reconciliation but the Reconciler between God and Man. He is the Atonement and the Propitiation (Reconciler).

10f This is the manifestation of that love toward us, that He sent Christ to be the propitiation, or substitute, for our sins. There is no higher manifestation of God's love toward us than this. Herein is love! God the Father sent His Son, His only Son, the delight of His heart, to be birthed into this world and live in poverty for 33 years in a backwater Roman province. He will be despised, rejected, mocked, insulted, ridiculed and put to the most painful, shameful and humiliating death that a man could die. On top of that, Christ will be nailed to that cross for 6 hours and literally become sin incarnate as He takes the sin of the whole upon Him to bear it and suffer the penalty and judgment of it. Christ will become sin and will force the Father to turn His face from His Son while on the cross because the Father could not allow Himself to gaze upon sin, even if it was personified in His own dear sin. The Father will be forced to pour out His infinite wrath upon His own Son and to bruise Him, and eventually die the death of hell. This is love! Would you be willing to sacrifice your only son for 33 years like this? Would you allow sinners to treat your son like Christ was treated? Would you place yourself into a situation where you would be forced to forsake your own son in his hour of greatest need and even to smite him? I doubt it for we simply do not have that kind of love. But God has that kind of love. If you want a good definition of love, then study the incarnation and the cross.

4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.^a

11a There is nothing complicated here. God loves us. Since we are the recipients of that love then we ought to manifest that same love that was manifested toward us and direct it toward our brethren, who are also the recipients of the love of God. If God loved us then we ought to love as well.

4:12 No man hath seen God at any time.^a If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.^b

12a What about Adam, Abraham, Moses, and the disciples? Didn't they at some point see God? No man has ever seen the face of God although some men have seen God (Exodus 24:10; 33:18-23) but they did not see the whole, entire essence of God with the physical eye. You may see a part of God or get a glimpse of Him but no man has really gazed upon the full glory of God. We will one day get that glimpse for we shall see Him as he is (1 John 3:2).

12b Two benefits if we love each other properly as God would have us to do:

1. God dwells in us. We are truly saved because we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). Even more than that, we have fellowship with God because He is actually living within us as a resident, as a member of the family, and not as a mere guest. We can enjoy full fellowship and a deep relationship with God if we love each other.

2. His love is perfected in us. We perfect the love of God manifested in our lives when we love with that same kind of love and direct it towards others. Our relationship with God is actually strengthened and deepened when we love the brethren. If our love toward God is cold or if our fellowship and relationship to Him is weak, it is due to the fact that we are not properly loving the brethren as we ought to. Manifesting this sort of love will go a long way in improving our relationship with God and making us better Christians and allowing us to enjoy our salvation more.

4:13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.^a

13a This is tied into Romans 8:9 where we know we are saved if we have the Holy Spirit. A man cannot be saved unless he has the Holy Spirit indwelling him for Romans 8:9 says that if a man has not the spirit of Christ then he is not God's. So if we know that we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, then we may know that we are saved and that we have fellowship with Him.

4:14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.^a

14a This sounds very much like 1:1-3. John is expressing His complete and certain confidence in these facts. We have seen it and we can testify concerning it with full faith, confidence that the Father has indeed sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. If you cannot give a similar testimony with this same kind of assurance, then you are not saved! John says we KNOW. If you do not know, then why not? Are you not believing in the gospel which testifies to this? If not, then you are not a Christian. No true Christian would hesitate for a moment to give the same affirmation that John gives in this verse.

4:15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.^a

15a A public confession is a good test of salvation. If a man will confess that Jesus is the Son of God, then God dwells in him, and that Christian is in God. Romans 10:9 says the same thing about confession. In Romans, confession is also presented as a product of faith that is associated with salvation, since it takes faith to make the confession of the Lord Jesus Christ. John looks at this confession as a way to know that God dwells in us and we in Him.

4:16 And we have known^a and believed^a the love that God hath to us.^b God is love;^c and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.^d

16a "known and believed" Both verbs are in the perfect tense, showing an absolute knowledge about the love of God to us. We know it, we've experience it and we have no doubts about the reality of it whatsoever.

16b We know this by the revelation of the Bible that tells us as well as personal experience. We know God's love because we have experienced God's love in our lives and can testify to it from a firsthand account.

16c "God is love" Repeated from 4:10.

16d This Is a reciprocal arrangement. Dwell in God and He will dwell in you. If God dwells in us then we in turn can dwell in Him.

4:17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment:^a because as he is, so are we in this world.^b

17a For the Christian, this "day of judgment" would be the bema judgment of Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 3 and Revelation 4, where Christians will stand before Christ to give account of our lives, ministries and stewardships since the day of our salvation. If our relationship to God is right, then we will have nothing to fear in that day and we may be bold (not arrogant or proud) in the day that we are examined, confident that we will pass the test and that our love will survive the fire of God's purifying judgment. We may speak in frankness with freedom of speech and respond in boldness to the material and information that God will require of us at the bema judgment.

Why would we have such boldness in the day of judgment? "Because Christ shall be the Judge- What abundant peace will it give you in that day, when you see Christ is Judge! He that shed His blood for you. He that is your Surety, your Shepherd, your all. It will take away all fear. You will be able to say, Who shall condemn? for Christ hath died. In the very hand that opens the books you will see the marks of the wounds made by your sins (Robert Murray McCheyne, in *Memoirs and Remains of Robert Murray McCheyne*, pages 413-414)." McCheyne probably held to a general judgment, so he may have equated the bema judgment of Christians with the Great White Throne judgment for sinners. This would be theologically incorrect. We split these two judgments and say that the bema judgment for the Christian takes place 1007 years before the Great White Throne judgment.

17b We are as God in the world, representing Him as ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). We are to be as He is- holy and loving- in this world because that is how God is. If we are His children, His witnesses and His ambassadors, then we ought to emulate His characteristics and personality as much as possible as we seek to represent Him and His truth before this fallen world system and age in which we live.

4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear:^a because fear hath torment.^b He that feareth is not made perfect in love.^c

18a Are we afraid of God as one would be afraid of an ogre or tyrant? Then our love toward God is not perfect. Are we afraid of death or the future? Then our love toward God is not perfect. Perfect love translates into faith, a strong faith in God that erases this fear. If our love toward God is perfect (entire and wanting nothing) then we will not fear to witness or preach or expose, nor will we worry about "what shall we eat, what shall we drink, with what shall we be clothed?" Perfect love will translate into a perfect faith.

Fear makes you paranoid and saps you of faith and destroys your relation to God and renders service to God ineffective. Fear will punish you as the jailer will punish the inmate. Fear can accomplish the type of damage in the Christian's life that is next to impossible to fix.

18b "because fear hath torment" There is no worse taskmaster than fear. Fear will prevent you from doing what you need to do or ought to do. Fear will rob you of joy and comfort.

"torment" This word conveys the notion of punishment for the correction and bettering of the offender. It does not always have this strict meaning in the New Testament.

18c Perfect love casts out fear while imperfect love breeds fear. These are all connected and related to each other.

4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.^{a-b}

19a This is similar to 4:10. God loved us before we loved Him. We did not start loving God on our own or on our own volition. The only reason we love God is because He first loved us. We would not love God if He had not first loved us. Love starts with God and flows from God. Man is simply the recipient of that love.

19b "Look through all the pages of history, and put to the noblest men and women, who seem still to live, this question, 'Who loves Christ?' and, at once, up from the dark dungeons and cruel racks there rises the confessor's cry 'We love him'; and from the fiery stake, where they clapped their hands as they were being burned to death, the same answer comes 'We love him'. If you could walk through the miles of catacombs at Rome, and if the holy dead, whose dust lies there, could suddenly wake up, they would all shout 'We love him'. The best and bravest of men, the noblest and purest of women, have all been in this glorious company; so surely, you are not ashamed to come forward and say 'Put my name down among them' (Charles Spurgeon, "The Secret of Love to God" in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 47:268, sermon 2730)."

4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?^a

20a How can this man claim to love God, whom He has not seen (4:12), if he cannot love his brother whom he has seen? If you can't love him who you can see then you cannot love He who is invisible. The point is that it is impossible to properly love God if we hate our brother. It can't be done. You cannot love God if you hate your brother. It is much easier to love your brother because you can see him and can relate to him. But if you find it so hard to love your brother, how then can you love God, which is much more difficult? It is like saying you can do calculus but can't add 2 and 2. You must have the basics and the foundation down before you can move on to the advanced material. Basic love is loving our brother. Advanced love is loving God. Before we can love God, we must first cultivate that love with our brethren, those who have been born of the same spiritual womb.

4:21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.^a

21a This commandment that John gives is that "who loveth God love his brother also." If we claim to love God we must also love our brother. Our love toward God is nullified if we do not

love our brethren. One cannot love God and hate his brother. You must love God AND your brother, else you cannot honestly say that you love God. It cannot be loving God OR your brother for that is no kind of Christian love at all.

1 John Chapter 5

5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ^a is born of God^{b-c-d} and every one that loveth him that begat^e loveth him also that is begotten of him.^f

1a The Tyndale, Coverdale and Bishops all omit the definite article. The ESV has "that Christ". The ESV correctly retains the definite article, as it really needs to be included to distinguish between "the Christ" (the correct Christ, Jesus Christ) and the possibility of other, false christs being considered. We need to shut the door as tightly as we can to exclude false messiahs as much as we can.

1b A test of salvation is that if a man believes that Jesus is the Christ, he is born of God, or saved. That does not mean that you will agree with everything that man believes, for he may be saved and be a Calvinist, an Arminian, a Baptist, a Lutheran, a Presbyterian, an immersionist or a baby dipper or anything else. The doctrine associated with this belief is not what John is dealing with. John is interested with whether the man is saved. Get that down first, then worry about that man's doctrine. Salvation first, then doctrine.

This phrase "born of God" also is used in 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:4,18 and shows the characteristics for one who is truly born again, or "born of God". He will manifest these spiritual distinctives in his life.

1c "The Cerinthian Gnostics denied the identity of Jesus and the Christ. That is, they denied that the individual whom the Christian Church knew by the name of 'Jesus' was also the Christ (Kenneth Wuest, , *In These Last Days*, 2:172)...The combination 'Jesus Christ' used together by John to designate one individual, is a refutation of the Cerinthian Gnostic heresy to the effect that Jesus was the person, only human, not deity, and that the Christ or divine element came upon Him at His baptism and left Him before His death on the Cross (Kenneth Wuest, *In These Last Days*, 2:175)."

1d The problem with this is that the devils believe this as well and they tremble (James 2:19). Obviously, devils are not born of God, so how do we handle this? The key is the "tremble" in James 2:19. To believe and rejoice is to believe unto salvation. To believe and tremble is to believe unto condemnation. The devils know full well who Jesus is but they are not about to bow down or worship Him as Lord. The devils have this knowledge in the head but not in the heart so it does not make them better or into believers, as it does with Christians.

1e "him that begat" is God while "him...that is begotten of him" is the Christian.

1f "and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." This deals with loving the brethren. If we are begotten of God then we will love those who are also begotten of him, for these fellow-Christians will be our spiritual brothers and sisters. John dealt with the necessity of loving the brethren in chapters 3 and 4. But why must we love them? Because God begot them as He did us, so that gives us a family relation stronger than blood. Spiritual relationships are stronger than blood ties. If we love our blood relatives, who may not even be saved, we ought to love our spiritual brethren, who are all saved, even more, with a stronger love.

5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.^a

2a How can we test our salvation and know that we are saved? Through our love toward the brethren and our obedience, love and keeping of the commandments of God. These two things must always accompany salvation. If a professor is lacking one or both of these then his profession of salvation is either defective or false.

5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.^{a-b}

3a We prove our love to God if we keep His commandments. If we truly love God then we will keep His commandments and find delight in the doing. How can we say we love God if we hate His law and do not do His commandments? If we really love Him, then there will be a desire to please Him and to serve Him through our obedience toward His commandments and laws. Antinomians and others who hate the laws and commandments of God have a real problem. They feel no obligation nor desire to keep the commandments, denouncing such doctrine as "legalism", "Jewish" or a "works salvation". They may even misuse dispensational truth by crowing "We're not under law but under grace!" No, it is a manifestation of love. I love God, therefore I echo what David said in Psalm 119:97 "O how I love thy law!" That is the acid test of love- what do you think of the commandments and law of God? If you love them then you are saved. If you hate them and have no desire to keep them then your claim of salvation is in question.

3b If they are it is not God's fault but the problem rather lies with us. A godly man has no problem at all with the law of God or in keeping the commandments. He loves them and desires to keep them. They are his joy, delight and constant meditation. Again, Psalm 119 (all of it) reveals this to us. But if we whine, moan and complain about the law and commandments and look for ways to wiggle out of them, then that reveals a serious spiritual and heart problem on our part. If you find the commandments and law grievous, then who has the problem, you or God? John said that "we do not find His commandments grievous." John had no problem with them, so why do you? God is not a harsh taskmaster and His law is not that of a tyrant or despot or an ogre. He is love and His law is light and we had better see it in that way.

5:4 For whatsoever^a is born of God^b overcometh^c the world:^d and this is the victory that overcometh^b the world, even our faith.^{e-f}

4a Another "neuter" pronoun used for persons and individuals. See notes under 1:1.

4b This phrase "born of God" also is used in 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,18 and shows the characteristics for one who is truly born again, or "born of God". He will manifest these spiritual distinctives in his life. In this verse, he will overcome the world system and the sinful generation in which he lives and will live a life of abounding and ever progressing victory.

4c This defines who the "overcomers" are in Revelation 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21. They who overcome are those who are born of God, who love God and who keep His commandments. They have gotten the victory over their particular, unique generations and the compromises that were offered by the apostates of their day. They had to face "head on" and go against infidelity, modernism, liberalism, atheism, philosophy, Roman Catholic and Protestant persecutions

(especially if they were Baptist or Anabaptist), carnality, worldliness, television, radio, jazz music, the United Nations, Republican and Democratic administrations, Civil Wars, the destruction of the Constitution, wars, perverted Bible versions, Southern Gospel Music, Contemporary Christian Music, PTL Clubs, Purpose-Driven nonsense, "faith seed offerings", faith healers, etc., etc., etc. They would not give in to these pressures and refused to compromise with them. They stood against these while standing for the Lord and the truth. This is why they are overcomers- they overcame the world, the flesh and the devil.

4d "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world" We do not have to try to overcome the world (this age, this fallen system)- we already have, positionally in Christ. We are not striving for the victory, we have it already. This victory over this world comes not of ourselves or from ourselves but rather through God, in His birthing of us into His family. We must overcome the world else we will perish. We must either overcome it or it will overcome us. We are at war with the world and it is with us. If it cannot reclaim us back into its slavery then it will seek to destroy us. Peace and cease-fire are out of the question, so one must destroy the other. There is no other option. Practically, it can be a different story. We must do "hand-to-hand" combat with the world and ourselves on a daily, even a continual basis. The only way we have any hope of victory on this practical level is through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Only a Christian has any hope of this victory. No unsaved person does, as he does not want this kind of victory over the world since he is still part of it. But Christians can. Yet many professors have little desire to be overcomers when "going along to get along" is so much more profitable. If you doubt that, ask Joel Osteen, Binny Hinn and Joyce Meyer for an example. Compromisers like these overcome nothing as they have no desire to attack the world or their generation, as it pays too good. We would have to wonder just how "saved" these kind of "Christians" really are. How can they love God and the Scripture while they are refusing to attack this world system? How can they love both God and mammon, when Christ said they couldn't?

Jesus overcame the world (John 16:13) but He had to be crucified in order to secure that victory. This shows that the only way to be an overcomer is to die to self, sin and the world and to not love your life unto the death (Revelation 12:11). This is why Paul spoke of himself as crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). You cannot overcome the world until you die to it and you cannot get the victory over yourself until you die to self.

Some may try to apply the "overcoming" to the references to the Overcomers in Revelation 2 and 3 and try to apply this to the tribulation period. But those Revelation references are to churches in the New Testament dispensation that we are in now, so they would not have a reference to tribulation saints. We do know that the tribulation saint does have to "overcome" and to "endure to the end" in order to be saved in Matthew 24:13 and that apostasy is the "unpardonable sin" in the tribulation. But in this context, that's a secondary doctrinal application.

4e We gain the victory over the world system through our faith in God. Faith is our weapon against the flesh, the world and the devil. Not in our faith in ourselves or in anything else, but only through our faith in God. We are in constant battle with this world system as it seeks either to control us, or, failing that, to destroy us. Yet it is through Christ and His power alone that we have the victory over this world system.

4f "Satan has seated himself on his blood-stained throne, and who shall get him down except by main force and fight and war?...Alas! for that earth is the battle-field where good must combat with evil. Angels look on and hold their breath, burning to mingle in the conflict, but the troops of the Captain of Salvation may be none but the soldiers of the cross and that slender band must fight alone and yet shall triumph gloriously...What is then the behavior of the Lord's warrior, when he sees the world take up arms against him, and when he sees all the earth, like an army,

coming to chase him and utterly destroy him? Does he yield? Oh no! Like Luther, he writes *cedo nulli* on his banner, 'I yield to none' (Charles Spurgeon, "The Victory of Faith" in *New Park Street Pulpit*, 1:101-103, sermon 14)."

5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?^a

5a The overcomer is further defined as he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. This man is saved because he is believing unto salvation. Armed with this faith in the Savior, he overcomes the world, the flesh and the devil without and overcomes the sin nature within. Belief is the key to this victory.

5:6^a This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ;^b not by water only, but by water and blood.^c And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

6a There are three trinities in these three verses of 6, 7 and 8- a triple trinity:

1. Verse 6- water, blood, Spirit
2. Verse 7- Father, Word, Holy Ghost
3. Verse 8- Spirit, water, blood

This is a beautiful symmetry of the King James text that would be destroyed if verse 7 were amended as the apostates insist.

6b Jesus came by water and blood. John goes further with this in John 19:34 "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." Blood and water came out of the side of the Saviour at His death. His redemption came through this shed blood and water, which flowed out of His pierced side while hanging on the cross. But "water and blood" could also refer to the humanity of Christ. He had human blood and was born of the "water" of natural Birth, as we all were. This points back to the incarnation/and the humanity of Christ, both of which we must accept if we are to be saved and be orthodox in our doctrine. And the blood? Christ, as a man, had human blood, just as human as yours and mine. The only difference was that His blood did not contain the contamination of sin, as ours does. This is because Christ did not have a human father, although He had a human mother. His Father was God. Sin is transmitted in the seed of the father.

6c Since Jesus' Father was God and not sinful man, He escaped contracting the sin nature. His blood then was human blood with the exception that it contained no sin.

5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven,^{a-b} the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.^{c-d-e}

7a Three bear witness in heaven of these truths of the incarnation:

1. The Father
2. The Word, which is Jesus
3. The Holy Ghost

7b The Trinity! All three members of the Godhead witness to these truths of the incarnation. This is a hated doctrine among the cults as the Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons and Christian

Scientists all attack the doctrine, not to mention groups like the United Pentecostals and Muslims.

7c "These three are one." There is a unity in the Godhead. Great is the mystery of this godliness (1 Timothy 3:16)! Three are One. We have no trouble with the doctrine of the Trinity although cultists and heretics choke on it. They just need to be saved and then they would have no difficulty with this truth. We have one Godhead that is composed of three separate, distinct, individual personalities- the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is God. But we do not worship three Gods as our cultic enemies charge us. We Worship one God, existing in three persons. We cannot explain this doctrine for it is beyond our understanding. But we can draw some parallels to it that we can understand. Man is also a trinity. Each person has three parts- physical, soulish and spiritual. Now our "components" do not and cannot operate independently. But the "three parts of God" (this is not a good term to use to describe the trinity but I use it for lack of a better term. I hope you understand what I am trying to say) do operate independently. God can separate Himself into His three "parts". The Soul of God is represented by the Father. The Spirit is obviously the Holy Spirit. The physical part of God is the Lord Jesus Christ. Man has these three parts. I have these three parts, yet I am only one person. Am I three persons because I have three parts? No, I am one person made up of three parts, just as the Godhead is One God made up of three personalities, who are all equal to each other in power and glory.

7d "If you will carefully read in Exodus 29 or in Leviticus 8, you will see that when a priest was ordained (and a priest was a type of Christ) three things were always used: he was washed with water in every case, a sacrifice was brought, and his ear, his thumb and his toe were touched with blood, and then he was anointed with oil, in token of that unction of the Spirit with which the coming High Priest of our profession would be anointed. So that every priest came by the anointing Spirit, by water, and by blood, as a matter of type, and if Jesus Christ be indeed the priest that was for to come, he will be known by these three signs (Charles Spurgeon, "The Three Witnesses" in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 20:446, sermon 1187)."

7e This verse is attacked because of its strong proclamation of the trinity and deity of Christ. Heretics, liberals, world religionists and cultists hate this doctrine because it is beyond the limited understanding of man. So out it goes! The last half of verse 7 is missing in the ESV. This verse then is one of the most hated and attacked in the Bible. We will summarize the controversy surrounding this verse and defend its inclusion in the Scripture, as well as its inspiration. We must then reject the opposition to this verse and maintain that it indeed belongs in our Bibles and is inspired of God.

Almost all the objections to the inclusion of the verse (as Adam Clarke said in 1807) came from "Unitarians of all classes" demonstrates that it indeed did draw attention to these doctrines. It would explain the dispute over "theos os" in 1 Timothy 3:16. It is difficult to suppose that it was merely incidental that the objections to such a verse came from so many Unitarians.

The following are some quotes from Michael Maynard's book *The Debate Over 1 John 5:7*. His book is a bibliography of materials dealing with these verses from the first century to the modern day. Maynard shows that the verses are legitimate, although heavily attacked by those with a doctrinal opposition to the Trinity. Maynard's evidences in support of the traditional reading of this verse are unanswerable. His is perhaps the best treatment of this "controversy".

"Kenyon said of Codex Vaticanus, 'A few readings from it were supplied to Erasmus by his correspondent Sepulveda, but too late for use in his editions of the New Testament.' In this claim, Kenyon made two serious errors. It was not 'too late' because Erasmus' 5th edition appeared in 1535 two years later. Nor was it merely a 'few readings,' for in this letter, Sepulveda furnished Erasmus 'with 365 readings as a convincing argument in support of his statements' that Codex Vaticanus is 'a weighty proof of excellence with the Latin version'... (Maynard, p. 88).

"A recent myth (originated by Rummel in 1986, and now parroted by James R. White in 1995) is that Erasmus challenged Edward Lee to find a Greek manuscript which included 1 John 5:7. A much older myth is that Erasmus promised to insert the verse if such a Greek manuscript were produced. Maynard indicated that the Dean of the Faculty of Theology, at Rijksuniversiteit, (Leiden, The Netherlands) has refuted both myths. The Dean, H.J. de Jonge, is a recognized specialist in Erasmian studies. H.J. de Jonge refuted the old myth of a promise in 1980, and he refuted the new myth of a challenge (which Rummel devised in reaction to the burial of the promise myth) in a letter of June 13, 1995, to Maynard: "I have checked again Erasmus' words quoted by Erika Rummel and her comments on them in her book Erasmus' Annotations. This is what Erasmus writes [on] in his Liber tertius quo respondet ... Ed. Lei: Erasmus first records that Lee had reproached him with neglect of the MSS. of 1 John because Er. (according to Lee) had consulted only one MS. Erasmus replies that he had certainly not used only one ms., but many copies, first in England, then in Brabant, and finally at Basle. He cannot accept, therefore, Lee's reproach of negligence and impiety. 'Is it negligence and impiety, if I did not consult manuscripts which were simply not within my reach? I have at least assembled whatever I could assemble. Let Lee produce a Greek MS. which contains what my edition does not contain and let him show that that manuscript was within my reach. Only then can he reproach me with negligence in sacred matters.' From this passage you can see that Erasmus does not challenge Lee to produce a manuscript etc. What Erasmus argues is that Lee may only reproach Erasmus with negligence of MSS if he demonstrates that Erasmus could have consulted any MS. in which the Comma Johanneum figured. Erasmus does not at all ask for a MS. containing the Comma Johanneum. He denies Lee the right to call him negligent and impious if the latter does not prove that Erasmus neglected a manuscript to which he had access. In short, Rummel's interpretation is simply wrong. The passage she quotes has nothing to do with a challenge. Also, she cuts the quotation short, so that the real sense of the passage becomes unrecognizable. She is absolutely not justified in speaking of a challenge in this case or in the case of any other passage on the subject" (Maynard, p.383).

"Romanists corrupt the text for the goal of ecumenism. The strategy is not new. As shown above Erasmus believed that the Ecumenical Council of 1438-1445 modified Greek MSS to conform to the Latin to effect 'reunion of the Latin and Greek churches.' ...No one denies that Satan is the Enemy....It may be observed that the strategy of Satan shifts in nearly every century. He does use cults, etc., but Romanism always seems to be his major tool. His present intent is ecumenism. The principle factor for the means to this end is textual corruption. Since this is at the basis of ecumenism, then the present debate over Bible versions is not unnecessary as many claim. Since the Scriptures are the basis to settle all doctrinal controversies, then when compared with all other serious challenges that face Christians today, it is surely the single most crucial issue" (Maynard, p. 291).

The following information is from *Believing Bible Study* by Edward Hills, pages 210-214:

"7 For there are three that bear record IN HEAVEN, THE FATHER, THE WORD, AND HOLY GHOST; AND THESE THREE ARE ONE. 8 AND THERE ARE THAT BEAR WITNESS IN EARTH, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

"The Words printed in capital letters constitute the so-called Johannine comma, the best known of the Latin Vulgate readings of the Textus Receptus, a reading which, on believing principles, must also be regarded as possibly genuine. This comma has been the occasion of much controversy and is still an object of interest to textual critics. One of the more recent discussions of it is found in Windisch's *Katholischen Briefe* (revised by Preisker, 1951); a more accessible treatment of it in English is that provided by A. E. Brooke (1912) in the *International Critical Commentary*. Metzger (1964) also deals with this passage in his handbooks but briefly.

How I John 5:7 entered the Received Text

"As has been observed above, the Textus Receptus has both its human aspect and its divine aspect, like the Protestant Reformation itself or any other work of God's providence. And when we consider the manner in which the Johannine comma entered the Textus Receptus, we see this human element at work. Erasmus omitted the Johannine comma from the first edition (1516) of his printed Greek New Testament on the ground that it occurred only in the Latin version and not in any Greek manuscript. To quiet the outcry which arose, he agreed to restore it if but one Greek manuscript could be found which contained it. When one such manuscript was discovered soon afterwards, bound by his promise, he included the disputed reading in his third edition (1522), and thus it gained a permanent place in the Textus Receptus. The manuscript which forced Erasmus to reverse his stand seems to have been 61, a 15th or 16th century manuscript now kept at Trinity College, Dublin. Many critics believe that this manuscript was written at Oxford about 1520 for the special purpose of refuting Erasmus, and this is what Erasmus himself suggested in his notes. {From what I understand this is according to Hort, and there is no record of the notes from Erasmus. I think this came from thin air like the Westcott and Hort Greek text.)

"The Johannine Comma is also found in Codex Ravianus, in the margin of 88, and in 629. The evidence of these three manuscripts, however, is not regarded as very weighty, since the first two are thought to have taken this disputed reading from early printed Greek texts and the latter (like 61) from the Vulgate. (Since Hills wrote this, the latest United Bible Society Greek Testament list six Greek cursive MSS which contain it - 61, 88 mg, 429 mg, 629, 636 mg, and 918. Moreover D. A. Waite cites evidence of some fourteen others containing it. Tom Strouse, from whom this information is taken was able to confirm in addition to the above - 634 mg, omega 110, 221 area 2318; along with two lectionaries - 60, 173; and four Fathers- Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine and Jerome).

"But whatever may have been the immediate cause, still, in the last analysis, it was not trickery which was responsible for the inclusion of the Johannine comma in the Textus Receptus but the usage of the Latin-speaking Church. It was this usage which made men feel that this reading ought to be included in the Greek text and eager to keep it there after its inclusion had been accomplished. Back of this usage, we may well believe, was the guiding providence of God, and therefore the Johannine comma ought to be retained as genuine.

The early Existence of I John 5:7

"Evidence for the early existence of the Johannine Comma is found in the Latin versions and in the writings of the Latin Church Fathers. For example, it seems to have been quoted at Carthage by Cyprian (c. 250), who writes as follows: "And again concerning the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit it is written: and the Three are one." It is true that Facundus, a 6th century African bishop, interpreted Cyprian as referring to the following verse, but, as Scrivener (1883) remarks, it is "surely safer and more candid" to admit that Cyprian read the Johannine comma in his New Testament manuscript "than to resort to the explanation of Facundus. "

"The first undisputed citations of the Johannine comma occur in the writings of two 4th century Spanish bishops, Priscillian, who in 385 was beheaded by the Emperor Maximus on the charge of sorcery and heresy, and Idacius Clarus, Priscillian's principal adversary and accuser. In the 5th century the Johannine comma was quoted by several orthodox African writers to defend the doctrine of the Trinity against the gainsaying of the Vandals, who ruled North Africa from 439 to 534 and were fanatically attached to the Arian heresy. And about the same time it was cited by Cassiodorus (480-570) in Italy. The comma is also found in r, an Old Latin manuscript of the 5th or 6th century, and in the Speculum, a treatise which contains an Old Latin text. It was not included in Jerome's original edition of the Latin Vulgate, but around the

year 800 it was taken into the text of the Vulgate from the Old Latin manuscript. It was found in the great mass of the later Vulgate manuscripts and in the Clementine edition of the Vulgate, the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

Is I John 5:7 an Interpolation?

"Thus on the basis of the external evidence it is at least possible that the Johannine comma is a reading that somehow dropped out of the Greek New Testament text but was preserved in the Latin text through the usage of the Latin-speaking Church, and this possibility grows more and more toward probability as we consider the internal evidence. In the first place, how did the Johannine comma originate if it be not genuine, and how did it come to be interpolated into the Latin New Testament text? To this question modern scholars have a ready answer. It arose, they say, as a Trinitarian interpretation of I John 5:8, which originally read as follows: For there are three that bear witness, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. Augustine was one of those who interpreted John 5:8 as referring to the Trinity. "If we wish to inquire about these things, what they signify, not absurdly does the Trinity suggest itself, who is the one, only, true, and highest God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, concerning whom it could most truly be said, Three are Witnesses, and the Three are One. By the word spirit we consider God the Father to be signified, concerning the worship of whom the Lord spoke, when he said, God is a spirit. By the word blood the Son is signified, because the word was made flesh. And by the word water we understand the Holy Spirit. For when Jesus spoke concerning the water which He was about to give the thirsty, the evangelist says, This He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those that believed in Him would receive."

"Thus, according to the critical theory, there grew up in the Latin-speaking regions of ancient Christendom a Trinitarian interpretation of the spirit, the water, and the blood mentioned in I John 5:8, the spirit signifying the Father, the blood the Son, and the water the Holy Spirit. And out of this Trinitarian interpretation of I John 5:8 developed the Johannine comma, which contrasts the witness of the Holy Trinity in heaven with the witness of the spirit, the water, and the blood on earth.

"But just at this point the critical theory encounters a serious difficulty. If the comma originated in a Trinitarian interpretation of 1 John 5:8, why does it not contain the usual Trinitarian formula the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Why does it exhibit the singular combination, never met with elsewhere, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit? According to some critics, this unusual phraseology was due to the efforts of the interpolator who first inserted the Johannine comma into the New Testament Text. In a mistaken attempt to imitate the style of the Apostle John he changed the term Son to the term Word But this is to attribute to the interpolator a craftiness which thwarted his own purpose in making this interpolation, which was surely to uphold the doctrine of the Trinity, including the eternal generation of the Son. With this as his main concern it is very unlikely that he would abandon the time-honored formula, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and devise an altogether new one, Father, Word, and Holy Spirit.

"In the second place, the omission of the Johannine comma seems to leave the passage incomplete. For it is a common scriptural usage to present solemn truths or warnings in groups of three and four, for example, the repeated three things, yea four of Proverbs 30, and the constantly recurring refrain, for three transgressions and for four, of the prophet Amos. In Genesis 40 the butler saw three branches, and the baker saw three baskets. And in Matthew 12:40 Jesus says, As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. It is in accord with biblical usage, therefore, to expect that in I John 5:7-8 the formula, there are three that bear witness, will be repeated at least twice. When the Johannine comma is included the formula is repeated twice. When the comma is omitted, the formula is repeated only once, which seems very strange.

"In the third place, the emission of the Johannine comma involves a grammatical difficulty. The words spirit, water, and blood are neuter in gender, but in I John 5:8 they are treated as masculine. If the Johannine comma is rejected, it is hard to explain this irregularity. It is usually said that in 1 John 5:8 the spirit, the water, and the blood are personalized and that this is the reason for the adoption of the masculine gender. But it is hard to see how such personalisation would involve the change from the neuter to the masculine: For in verse 6 the word Spirit plainly refers to the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. Surely in this verse the word Spirit is "personalized", and yet the neuter gender is used. Therefore, since personalisation did not bring about a change of gender in verse 6, it cannot fairly be pleaded as the reason for such a change in verse 8. If, however, the Johannine comma is retained, a reason for placing the neuter nouns spirit, water and blood in the masculine gender becomes readily apparent. It was due to the influence of the nouns Father and Word, which are masculine. Thus the hypothesis that the Johannine comma is an interpolation is full of difficulties.

Reasons for the possible Omission on 1 John 5:7

"For the absence of the Johannine comma from all New Testament documents save those of the Latin-speaking west the following explanations are possible:

"In the first place, it must be remembered that the comma could easily have been omitted accidentally through a common type of error which is called homoioteleuton (similar ending). A scribe copying 1 John 5:7-8 under distracting conditions might have begun to write down these words of verse 7, there are three that bear witness, but have been forced to look up before his pen had completed this task. When he resumed his work, his eye fell by mistake on the identical expression in verse 8. This error would cause him to omit all of the Johannine comma except the words in earth, and these might easily have been dropped later in the copying of this faulty copy. Such an accidental omission might even have occurred several times, and in this way there might have grown up a considerable number of Greek manuscripts which did not contain this reading.

"In the second place, it must be remembered that during the second and third centuries (between 220 and 270, according to Harnack) the heresy which orthodox Christians were called upon to combat was not Arianism (since this error had not yet arisen) but Sabellianism (so named after Sabellius, one of its principal promoters), according to which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were one in the sense that they were identical. Those that advocated this heretical view were called Patripassians (Father-sufferers), because they believed that God the Father, being identical with Christ, suffered and died upon the cross, and Monarchians, because they claimed to uphold the Monarchy (sole-government) of God.

"It is possible, therefore, that the Sabellian heresy brought the Johannine comma into disfavor with orthodox Christians. The statement, these three are one, no doubt seemed to them to teach the Sabellian view that the title Son, and the Holy Spirit were identical. And if during the course of the controversy manuscripts were discovered which had lost this reading in the accidental manner described above, it is easy to see how the Orthodox party would consider these mutilated manuscripts to represent the true text and regard the Johannine comma as a heretical addition. In the Greek-speaking East especially the comma would be unanimously rejected, for here the struggle against Sabellianism was particularly severe.

"Thus it is not impossible that during the 3rd century, amid the stress and strain of the Sabellian controversy, the Johannine comma lost its place in the Greek text but was preserved in the Latin texts of Africa and Spain, where the influence of Sabellianism was probably not so great. To suppose this, at any rate, is strictly in accord with the principles of believing Bible study. For although the Greek New Testament text was the special object of God's providential care, nevertheless, this care also extended, in lesser degree, to the ancient versions and to the

usage not only of Greek-speaking Christians but also of the other branches of the Christian Church. Hence, although the Traditional text found in the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts is a fully trustworthy reproduction of the divinely inspired original text, still it is possible their the text of the Latin Vulgate, which really represents the long-established usage of the Latin Church, preserves a few genuine readings not found in the Greek manuscripts. And hence, also, it is possible that the Johannine comma is one of these exceptional readings which, we may well believe, were included in the Textus Receptus under the direction of God's special providence."

The following versions retain it (in addition to the Authorized Version):

1. Bishop's Bible
2. Rhemis Douay Version. This Counter-Reformation Catholic translation is more accurate here than the modern Protestant translations!
3. Geneva Bible
4. New King James Version. The verse is questioned in the footnotes but at least they included it in the text.
5. John Wycliffe's Bible
6. Tyndale Bible (1534) included but in italics and in parentheses.
7. Cramner Bible (1539) included but in italics and parentheses. There would seem to be some uncertainty on the part of these translators in the early 16th century, yet they felt confident enough to include it but with a question mark. They erred correctly, on the side of safety.
8. Coverdale Bible

The following translations attack the reading:

1. New English Bible (1961)
2. New American Bible (Catholic) (1971)
3. Revised Standard Version (1952)
4. Today's English Version/Good News For Modern Man (1966)
5. Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation (1961)
6. Amplified Bible (1965), verse 7 is moved into verse 8 and is put into italics, which means that these translators believe that the phrase is not part of the original text.
7. New American Standard Version (1960), removed though the footnote gives the reading.
8. New International Version (1973), removed, though the footnote gives the reading.
9. Contemporary English Version (1995)
10. Revised Version (1881).
11. Living Bible (1962).
12. American Translation (Edgar Goodspeed, 1923)
13. New World Translation (Jehovah Witnesses, 1984 revision), removed. How do these men who attack the verse "feel" about the fact that they are in perfect agreement with the Jehovah Witnesses on this textual issue?
14. English Standard Version- omits the phrase. This is not unexpected since the ESV is nothing more than a revision of the RSV, which also attacked the verse. Why should we expect the ESV be any better than the RSV in these cases?
15. American Standard Version
16. John Darby's version omits it. I would also expect William Kelly's translation to omit it although I have not seen his translation. How unfortunate these early "Plymouth Brethren", especially Darby and Kelly, were infected with an unearned respect for so-called "textual criticism". Their attack on the verse does them a discredit.
17. The Jerusalem Bible. This is a liberal Roman Catholic version, so this is not a surprise.

- 18. New International Reader's Version (1996).
- 19. New American Bible (1970). This is the modern Catholic version.

Although Roman Catholic texts and the church itself generally don't accept 1 John 5:7 as genuine, at least one pope did- Leo XIII (1878-1903), but he was later reversed by other popes (Matthew Verschuur, *Fourth Draft of the Guide to the Pure Cambridge Edition of the King James Bible*, 2009, page 79)."

In conclusion, the verse, as it stands in our Authorized Version is accurate and belongs in the Scripture. To assume otherwise is to accept an apostasy and theological error. I am greatly disappointed that so many "fundamentalist" commentators attacked the verse. Their problem was that they put too much faith in so-called "Greek scholarship". Some "Greek scholar" told them the verse was not legitimate (for any reason) and they quoted a lot of Greek and cited a lot of manuscript evidence to support their claim. The believer, who knew little, if any, Greek and had no clue about anything pertaining to manuscript evidence, swallowed what he was told because he did not have the means to verify what he was told or he may have been too timid to stand against the so-called "authority". This happens in classrooms in so-called Christian colleges a thousand times a day and scores of young preachers are thus ruined because they would never think to challenge their professor on the matter. This is why you should never take anyone's word about anything if that person is attacking the Bible. If you don't have the resources to critique him, find someone who does, which is getting easier today with the internet and the increasing number of books being published that defend the integrity of our Authorized Version.

5:8 And there are three that bear witness in earth,^a the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.^{b-c-d}

8a Verse 7 deals with the heavenly witnesses to the truths of the incarnation that John relates, but what about three earthly witnesses to these same truths?

- 1. The spirit, the Holy Spirit
- 2. The water. This is not water baptism, for it has no saving grace or virtue. It is an act of obedience and identification but does not add or detract from our salvation. Now baptism is a witness to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6). When we are water baptized (by immersion!) then we give witness to this witness of the truth as we identify with it. We do also notice that regeneration is referred to under the figure of water in Titus 3:5, compared to a washing. It is by the washing of water by the Word we have this regeneration so this could have an application to the Word of God.
- 3. The blood, which would be the blood of Christ.

The ESV omits the first half of this verse.

8b Here is an earthly trinity for "these three agree in one. We then have a double witness, two triads, one in heaven and one in earth.

8c "Three candles in the room but the light is one; three witnesses to our heart but the witness is the same (Charles Spurgeon, exposition of 1 John 5 in volume 57 of *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, page 263)."

8d "Now, then, you young men, you need not read 'Paley's Evidences,' the evidence of the Spirit, the water, and the blood is better. You do not grant to study 'Butler's Analogy,' though you may if you please, but such books, excellent as they are, only prove the skin and shell of

our religion, and the vital matter is the kernel. If you come by simple prayer, and ask to have the blood of Jesus applied to devour soul, and if the Spirit of God works mightily in your spirit so that you obtain a new inner principle, and lead a new life as the result thereof, you will have the best evidence in the world... We have known some who will say, 'Look at my life, I am very different from what I was. I am a sober, honest, excellent man.' Yes, but do you Test in the blood of Jesus? Practical evidence is good, but it must arise out of faith. If you do not believe in Jesus you have not the essential witness, and your case is not proved. Many also say to us, 'I believe that Jesus died for me,' but we must ask them concerning their lives. Are you cleansed in act? Are you an altered man? (Charles Spurgeon, "The Three Witnesses", *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Sermon 1187)."

5:9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater:^a for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.^b

9a The witness of man is good and profitable if it is a godly, divine witness based on Scripture. But the witness of God is always greater. The witness of man is only valid if it agrees with the witness of God. If there is conflict between these witnesses, then you are to throw out the human witness and accept the divine witness. Jewish law said that a threefold testimony was valid. God gives us a double threefold testimony as in 5:7,8, so what need have we of the testimony of men?

9b Human witness must line up with this divine revelation, else it is invalid and false.

Notice this is in the perfect tense. God has testified regarding His Son in the Scripture and that is His last, final and complete word on that subject. Expect no further word to come from God regarding His Son than that which we already have.

5:10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself:^a he that believeth not God hath made^b him a liar; because he believeth^b not the record that God gave^b of his Son.^c

10a We have the witness of truth from the indwelling presence and internal witness of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our internal witness to the truth.

10b There are three perfect tense verbs in verse 10: "made him a liar", "believeth not" and "gave". Each is very telling:

1. "made him a liar" This unbelief is the final and irreversible product of a journey of unbelief. This didn't just start but it had been building for a long time, culminating in a final act of unbelief in the doctrines involved, which, in this context, are the doctrines around the trinity and the deity of Christ. His unbelief has resulted in him calling God a liar, as He did not really say what was recorded in Scripture, or He didn't really mean what He said. There is no talking this man out of this as he will not repent or change his mind regarding the truthfulness of God in these matters.
2. "believeth not" This is related to above. His final unbelief, which he cannot and will not repent of, led him to believe that God was a liar.
3. "gave" in God gave His Son. That is an absolute truth that cannot be debated, doubted or argued. It must be believed as compromise with this doctrine is impossible.

10c This man has rejected the witness of God and has instead accepted the invalid witness of man that did not agree with the witness of God. The divine witness this man rejected was "that God gave of his Son", or the incarnation. Since he has rejected the witness of God, he says that God is a liar and that the contradicting witness of man is true. Either man is true and God is a liar or man is a liar and is true. Fallen man very rarely, if ever, agrees with God. So you must make up your mind which witness you are going to accept.

5:11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.^a

11a This is the record that we are to accept as from God. This is truth and it comes from God. If the Witness of man contradicts this then it is false and is to be rejected.

5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.^a

12a This is similar to John 3:36. If a man has the Son of God through the new birth, then he has spiritual, eternal, true life. A man who has not the Son through the new birth (because he has never been born again) does not have life. He has physical life but that is life on the lowest level. Since he is still spiritually dead, his spirit is dead and thus he has no spiritual life. The unsaved man is a living dead man while the Christian is a dead living man. The Christian has crucified his old nature and died to sin and self. As a result, he is spiritually alive and will not taste the second death of the Lake of Fire of Revelation 20.

5:13 These things have I written unto you^a that believe on the name of the Son of God;^b that ye may know that ye have eternal life,^c and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.^{d-e}

13a "These things have I written unto you" in the 4 ½ chapters of this epistle up to this point.

13b "that believe on the name of the Son of God" These are Christians, not mere professors, but those who have been truly born again. Nor is John writing to the Gnostics or other false teachers.

13c Assurance of salvation! John says that the Christian may know that he is saved and that he has eternal life. If you do not know that, then you are probably not saved, for this is the most important inward witness that the Holy Spirit gives. If He is not witnessing to your spirit about salvation, then you are not saved. You can have assurance of salvation and know. You do not have to guess or hope. What a miserable way to live the Christian life! "Are you saved?" "Well, I sure hope so!" What if I were to ask my son if he was in the Cereghin family. What would he respond? "Well, I think so!" How silly. He knows he is in the Cereghin family and in no other. Why can he know that? Because his father has continually witnessed that to him. Our Father continually witnesses to us, His children, about our salvation, sonship, sanctification and security. The hardest thing is to believe it!

"Believe" naturally rules out any "plan of salvation" that includes works, ritual, sacrament, confession, pilgrimages, church membership, baptism, confession...anything except simply believing on what God wrote and said about Jesus Christ and the salvation He provides.

While having assurance of your salvation is not a requirement for salvation, it is absolutely necessary to have the satisfaction of your salvation and to enjoy your salvation.

13d This is the purpose of John's gospel (20:31). The epistle has a similar aim, to engender faith in the believer toward Christ.

13e The ESV omits the last part of this verse.

5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:^a

14a Here is our confidence in prayer revealed. We KNOW we have eternal life and we KNOW that He hears us in prayer. These two are linked- He hears us because we believe in Him. Christianity is a faith based on absolutes and the possibility that we can know certain things for a certainty, including whether we are saved or not, or if God hears our prayers or not.

5:15 And if we know^a that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.^{b-c}

15a We know, in an absolute, total sense.

15b The principle in prayer is this: if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.

1. First, we must ask. We must make our desires, petitions and requests known unto God. Formal petition to the throne of God must be made.

2. Our prayer must be in accordance to the will of God. God will not answer prayer that is contrary to His will.

3. He hears us if these two conditions are met. We must have the faith to believe that! If we do not believe that He hears us and can answer our prayer, then we will not see that prayer answer for unbelief has gotten in the way and we have called God a liar, for we have not believed His witness regarding prayer.

15c Notice these three certainties in verses 13-15

1. We can KNOW if we are saved- 5:13

2. We KNOW He hears us when we pray 5:14

3. We KNOW He will respond our prayers in 5:15

5:16 If any man see his brother sin^{a-b} a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death.^c There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.^{d-e-f}

16a John discusses the sin unto death. First, it needs to be defined. We notice first that it is committed by Christians, for John mentions the "brother" sinning this sin.

16b "brother" So this sin unto death is committed by individuals, not nations or groups. It is an individual sin. And it is a Christian's sin, since we are talking about a "brother". The unsaved are not referred to as "brother" so this sin applies to Christians.

16c This is a sin not unto death. Not every sin is a sin unto death. The sin unto death is a very special sin, a sin of unique classification.

16d If a Christian is guilty of this sin, Christians are not to pray for the guilty man. The sin is so serious that it is not to be prayed for and cannot be prayed for. Under normal situations, we would be expected to pray for a sinning brother but not here, showing this to be a sin of special severity.

16e So what is this sin? We still are not told. But it would involve a sin that is so serious that God must take radical and extreme measures to deal with it, even possibly the death of the individual. But John never comes out and identifies it. It is not called "The" sin unto death, so it deals with one classification, or type of sin, rather than one individual, specific sin. The whole context of the material before this passage deals with rejecting a witness of God and calling him a liar. So it is associated with unbelief and very possibly disobedience that stems from that unbelief. We must conclude then that the sin unto death is a continual, habitual practice of unbelief and disobedience to the witness of God. It is not a one-time sin but a continual one. If we know of a man who is continually disobedient and unbelieving regarding the revelations and witnesses of God, then we are not to pray for that man, for God will not hear our prayers concerning him. He is under judgment for his unbelief and disobedience which stems from it. There is a boundary somewhere regarding this obedience and disobedience that is not always easy to see, so it is simply best to stay as far as you can away from that border of sin.

16f "You need not be curious to enquire what this unpardonable sin is. I will give you an old illustration of mine concerning it. You may sometimes have seen a notice put up on certain estates in the country, 'Man-traps and spring guns set here;' but, if so, did you ever go round to the front door of the mansion and say 'If you please will tell me where the man-traps are and whereabouts the spring guns are set?' If you had asked that question, the answer would have been 'It is the very purpose of this warning not to tell you where they are, for you have no business to trespass there at all' (Charles Spurgeon, Exposition of 1 John 5 in volume 57 of *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, page 264)." The point here is that so many people worry continually about committing the unpardonable sin or the sin unto death, that they cannot do anything else or enjoy their salvation. I never worry about getting hit by a truck on the interstate for I very rarely walk across interstate highways. So I put little worry into this sin for I have no intention of lingering in this area.

5:17 All unrighteousness is sin:^a and there is a sin not unto death.

17a This is the definition of sin, to be compared to 3:4.

5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God^a sinneth not;^b but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

18a Things we know about the Christian, the man who is born of God through the new birth:

1. He sinneth not. There is that part of the Christian, given him in the divine depository of the new birth, that does not sin and cannot sin. That is the new, divine nature that comes from God that every Christian possesses. That cannot sin because it is of God. As long as that new nature is in control of the Christian, we cannot sin. But we do sin when we allow our old, fallen, Adamic nature to have control over our lives and we shove the power of the new nature aside.

2. He keepeth himself. This is self-sanctification. God is the one who keeps us from falling (Jude 24,25) but we also keep ourselves in a horizontal sense, as we practice separation from the flesh, the world and the devil. We keep ourselves from sin and the

age in which we live. God will not keep us from these things. We must do it ourselves through desire to live for and please God.

3. The wicked one toucheth him not. We are protected from Satan. See Job in Job 1 and 2. Satan needed permission to attack Job and even then, he had to do it within the limitations that God placed on him. The wicked one cannot touch us, unless the Lord allows him to for some reason.

Even then we still have the protection of God because God limits Satan's power over us even then.

We suspect that those guilty of the sin unto death may not enjoy such protection. Part of that judgment is when God takes that hedge of protection down and allows Satan to have his will and way with that Christian. We see this in 1 Corinthians 5:5 and 1 Timothy 1:20. Both times, the guilty parties in these verses are to be turned over to Satan to destroy their flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. This delivering over to Satan is the same procedure Paul commanded to the man guilty of incest in 1 Corinthians 5. If a man refuses correction of the church, he is to be turned out to let Satan beat on him a while. Maybe after his health was broken, his family destroyed and his money was gone, then he would be ready to submit himself to the authority of the local church and repent! It worked with this man guilty of incest, but we have no indication that it worked with Hymenaeus and Alexander. It is not just common church discipline but goes far beyond that. It involves the commitment of the offending person to Satan and the prayer for the hedge of divine protection to be removed from that person. Such drastic action is reserved for the worst of apostates and offenders.

This is the last usage of this phrase "born of God" in 1 John, which also appeared in 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1 and 4, which shows the distinguishing characteristics of the man who truly is born again, or "born of God", which is a main burden of John in this epistle.

18b "A man may come into a carpenter's shop and take up his tools, and do something at his work, but this makes him not a carpenter, because it is not his trade. The best saints sin, yet because it is not their trade and course, they are said not to sin (Isaac Ambrose, *Looking Unto Jesus*, page 30)."

5:19 And we know^a that we are of God,^b and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

19a "know" is in the perfect tense. We absolutely know two things:

1. That we are of God. A man can know if he has been born again beyond any shadow of a doubt. People who are not sure of their salvation probably aren't saved, or are very immature in their understanding of salvation. The indwelling Holy Spirit gives us that assurance and we ought not to doubt His witness to us.
2. The whole world lieth in wickedness. There can be absolutely no doubt about that! There is no part of this world system nor classification of unsaved men that are not in wickedness, and who are not in the control of Satan. Don't go looking for good spots in this world system for there are none. There may be some places that are "less fallen" than others and some that are not as sinful as others and even some areas that may seem to be moral and religious, but all of it, the entire world, lies in wickedness and is to be both rejected and separated from by the Christian.

19b The contrast is between the Christian, who is in God, and the world, or the unsaved in the world, who are in wickedness. You have to be in one place. You cannot be in both but you must be in one, either in God or in wickedness. If you are in God then you are not in wickedness. If you are in wickedness then you are not in God.

5:20 And we know that the Son of God is come,^a and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.^b This is the true God, and eternal life.^c

20a "And we know that the Son of God is come" in the incarnation. Again, this is one of the truths that we must accept if we are to be saved. We "know" this- perfect tense. There is no doubt or question in our minds as to whether Christ really came or that He came in the flesh. The Gnostics would wrestle with this and come to deny it, but that was their problem, not ours.

20b "his Son Jesus Christ" This is a clear declaration of the sonship of Christ, and, by extension, of the trinity.

20c This is the witness that we have received from God through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit that is given to all of us.

5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.^a Amen.

21a John ends with a rather abrupt exhortation. This is an important admonition to keep ourselves from idols and its resulting idolatry. The first two commandments in Exodus 20/Deuteronomy 5 command this prohibition from idolatry. Idolatry would plague Israel up until the Babylonian Captivity.

In a national sense, idolatry was abandoning the Covenant by replacing Jehovah with false gods, such as Baal or whatever the Jews were worshipping. These false gods had done nothing for Israel nor had they made a covenant with Israel; Jehovah had. Hence abandoning the worship of Jehovah was an act of treason which is why the act of idolatry was punishable by death to underscore the seriousness of the violation. Every man needs a god but man is prohibited from choosing his own gods. There is only one God and that is Jehovah. If a man will not worship Him, then that man must worship no god at all, not even himself or nature or anything (which is impossible since all men will worship something or someone).

Monotheism, which the First Commandment demands, was the original mode of religion until about the time of Nimrod. It may have had unrecorded roots in the ante-diluvian world. In this day, every nation was pagan and many were polytheistic. To establish a monotheistic nation would put Israel into a unusual and unique position spiritually among all the other nations of the earth. Yet it was simply a revival of original religion as preserved from Eden. Adam was monotheistic. When sin entered the race, man became polytheistic, worshipping everything under the sun including the sun.

This commandment prohibits putting anything or anyone before God in importance. Anything or anyone that comes between you and God is an idol. God must have first place in all things. No other gods- GOOD OR BAD!

The New Testament repeat of this commandment is found in Matthew 4:10 "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve". The Second Commandment is related to the first, which prohibits graven images. This commandment is also restated in Leviticus 26:1,2. This carries the thought of idolatry into the practice of it. To have an idol, you must be able to see it. But since the One True God is Spirit (John 4:24) and invisible (Colossians 1:15), it is impossible to build a graven image to Him. Therefore every graven image is of a false god, even if it is dedicated to Jehovah.

If you were going to make a graven image of Jehovah, what would you make? Natural religion demands a visible object of worship. Men want to worship something tangible,

something they can see. Hence they turn to the worship of the sun, moon, stars, animals and eventually themselves via humanism. But true religion is based on a totally different presupposition, based on John 4:24 which says true worship of the true God is not a physical worship but is rather spiritual since it worships an invisible God who is Spirit. This forbids man from creating his own gods. A graven image is a statue that man has designed and carved to his own specifications. Hence he creates his own gods, something the Lord cannot and will not tolerate.

Worshipping other gods or trying to make some form of a physical representation of Jehovah is an attack upon the nature and person of Jehovah and robs Him of His glory and shows a lack of fear and respect for Him.

This also prohibits any "aids to worship" in any "Christian Church", especially used in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.. Such aids would function as an intermediary between God and man, thus taking that ministry away from Christ. Only Christ can help man to God, no image can. Thus using images is an attack upon the ministry of Christ as our mediator between God and man. Eventually, the worship shifts from the god that image represents to the image itself, hence completing the downward slide into idolatry.

What were some of the things men were carving in order to worship?

1. Things in heaven. Worshipping angels or heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars [astrology!]). Romanist worship includes Mary and the saints, who are worshipped despite denials by Romanists.
2. Things on the earth. Worshipping animals or men. Again, Romanist worship includes the Pope who ought to be worshipped if he is as who he claims to be- God on Earth. Yet he is not Jehovah and so despite his claims, he is not to be worshipped or be given any special form of reverence, seeing he is but a man.
3. Things in the water under the earth. This includes devils. But why the association with water? Unless sea creatures were also being worshipped (serpents, leviathan [Job 41!]). Also consider Dagon, the fish god of the Philistines. Men have often worshipped devils (1 Corinthians 10:20; Revelation 9:20). This is Satan's ultimate goal- to be worshipped as God (Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28). This does not prohibit any engraving or similar artwork. The prohibition was using them as "aids to worship" or in worshipping them instead of God. For example, the priest's garments had pictures of pomegranates (Exodus 28:33,34; 39:24) but they were not worshipped nor had they any role to play in the tabernacle/temple worship! The mercy seat also had two sculptures of cherubim (Exodus 25:18-22; 37:7). Many have taken this too far in saying that art, photographs or busts are graven images. They are only if you fall down before them and worship them. So iconoclasm, as practiced by some Reformation groups, is not necessarily Biblical as Biblical art is permitted. But as soon as that art is worshipped or elevated to a position of devotion (such as Romanist "holy pictures" or Eastern Orthodox icons), then they are to be rejected.

There are several New Testament verses where we can see this commandment repeated:

1. Acts 15:20,29 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood...That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.
2. Acts 21:25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

3. 1 Corinthians 10:7,14 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play...Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.
4. Galatians 5:19,20 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
5. 1 John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

So what are we to keep ourselves from, with respect to idols?

1. Do not worship visible gods. God is an invisible spirit and we are continually warned not to try to make any visible representation of Him, for that is impossible. It also deals with thinking about God on a visible, earthly level. Man demands something he can see in his worship. That is natural, worldly thinking. Man wants an eye-centered salvation. God continually warns man "Don't think of me in a natural manner like that. I am far above your feeble thoughts. Do not drag me down to your level." This is the sin of idolatry- we force God into a box of human design. It reduces God down to a physical level that man can see, control and manipulate. We reduce God down to our level of thinking. But God will never allow Himself to be so humbled by man.
2. Don't worship other gods except the God of Israel. It is obvious that to do this is to worship a false god and is to be guilty of idolatry in its rankest form.
3. Do not worship yourself. Get rid of your self-righteousness and your carnal self-esteem and rely only on the righteousness of Christ. This also condemns humanism, where God is humanized and man is deified.
4. Keep yourself from ritualistic worship or from depending upon ritual in order to worship. Naturally, Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism must go, for they are sight-oriented ritualistic churches. But every world religion (except Judaism) must also go. Although Islam technically has no idols, it worships the moon god Allah and practically deifies Mohammad. That qualifies it as an idolatrous religion.
5. Don't make idols of other men. Follow men and honor and respect good men but do not make an idol out of them. Do not take every word they speak as infallible and do not follow any of their ways that may be fleshly or sinful. Recognize that all men are sinners and will fail and disappoint you eventually. Feel free to disagree with them if you must. If they need a rebuke, do not fail to give it. The sin is when men make an idol out of a man to the point that they believe that their idol can do no wrong and any attack on him is an attack upon God. Follow men only as they follow God but do not follow men as God.
6. Don't make an idol out of theological systems. The things we said under point 4 above also qualify here. I am a dispensationalist but I use it only as a tool to help me understand the Bible. I do not bow down to the Scofield Reference Bible or to John Nelson Darby's writings or to some man's interpretation of what a Baptist should believe or be. Follow Bible doctrine and revelation but be wary of manmade interpretations of that truth, for no human theological system is infallible. Many are guilty of this sin. Calvinists place way too much emphasis on the uninspired John Calvin and Lutherans are guilty of the same with Martin Luther, as are Methodists with respect to John Wesley. Use these good men but do not idolize them or make them the final authority for faith or practice.

APPENDIX 1: The Doctrine of the Antichrist Summarized.

1. Definition

1. The Satanically empowered man who will be offered as a substitute Christ to the world during the tribulation.

2. The Biblical Unfolding of the Antichrist

1. Genesis 10:8-10 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...

1. Nimrod's name means "rebellion", "panther". The Hebrew radical of his name means "spotted" or "specks". This "panther" is black, white and brown, like a leopard, which includes the skin colors of all the tribes on earth, so he is an integrated man. He represents everyone, can identify with anyone and will be popular with all kinds of men.

2. He was a mighty one.

3. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD, or in the sense of against the LORD.

1. Hunters do not have good typology in Scripture. Consider:

1. Nimrod

2. Ishamel, an archer

3. Esau

4. His line is Cainite. He is the 13th from Adam.

5. He established the modern day Babylonian- Roman religion (see Alexander Hislop's *The Two Babylons*) which introduced idolatry and the worship of a mother and child.

6. He established the kingdom of Babylon, which culminates into the last days apostate religious and political system (Jeremiah 51; Revelation 17,18).

7. He appears in Genesis 10:10 and 10 is the number of Gentile world power, which the Antichrist will head up.

1. "Ten" is the Gentile number in Biblical numerology:

1. The 10th man from Adam is the Father of the Gentiles, Japheth.

2. The first Gentile kingdom is established in Genesis 10:10.

3. Acts 10- the Gentile Pentecost.

4. Romans 10- the missionary call to the Gentiles.

5. John 10- Jesus speaks of other sheep not of this fold- Gentiles.

6. The last Gentile kingdom is represented by 10 toes- 10 nations.

7. Luke 10- one of the 10 lepers returns to give thanks to Christ for his healing and he is a Gentile.

8. Assyria is his land (Micah 5:6)

9. The Jerusalem Targum says of him "He was powerful in hunting and in wickedness before the Lord, for he was a hunter of the sons of men, and he said to them 'Depart from the judgment of the Lord and adhere to the judgment of Nimrod!' Therefore it is said 'As Nimrod the strong one, strong in hunting, and in wickedness before the Lord.'"

2. 2 Kings 18:13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

1. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, is a type of the Antichrist.

2. The Antichrist will do this in the tribulation against Israel.

3. 2 Chronicles 9:13,18,19 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold; (18) And there were six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne, and stays on each

side of the sitting place, and two lions standing by the stays: (19) And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom.

1. Solomon is a type of the Antichrist.
 2. He received 666 talents of gold a year.
 3. 6 steps to the throne.
 4. 12 lions (6 times 2).
4. Ezra 2:13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six.
1. We notice the 666 children of this family.
5. Job 40:15-24
1. Behemoth- the Beast from the earth. Compare with the Second Beast of Revelation 13:11-18, the False Prophet.
6. Job 41:1-34
1. Compare this Beast from the Sea with the First Beast of Revelation 13:1-8, who is the Antichrist
7. Psalm 55:20,21 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. (21) The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.
1. The Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel.
 2. He speaks smooth words and flatteries while preparing for war.
8. Psalm 89:22 The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
1. A title for the Antichrist- "The Son of Wickedness".
9. Isaiah 10:5-14
1. The Antichrist is called "O Assyrian"
 2. He is called "The rod of mine anger", showing that the Antichrist is a tool in the plan of God to judge the Gentiles and to prune Israel. He will operate with the allowance of God for 7 years.
 3. He is a destroyer- 10:7.
 4. He has designs against Samaria and Jerusalem- 10:10,11.
 5. He is proud and boastful- 10:12-14.
10. Isaiah 10:24-34 ("Assyrian")
1. He will smite Israel- 10:24.
11. Isaiah 14:25 That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders.
12. Isaiah 19:4 And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.
1. The Antichrist will also afflict the Egyptians.
13. Isaiah 23:13 Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not till the Assyrian founded it for them to dwell in the wilderness; they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin.
1. Speaking of Nimrod and his founding the Babylonian empire. Run this back to Genesis 10.
14. Isaiah 30:31-33 For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the LORD shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.
1. God will fight against the Antichrist with nothing more than His voice- 30:31.

2. He is called a king- 30:33.
3. Tophet is prepared for him- 30:33.
 1. "Tophet" was a place in the valley of Hinnom, meaning "detestable", a place of cremation. It was a place of human sacrifice to Moloch- 2 Kings 23:10.
 2. It is a place of fire, brimstone and consuming.
15. Isaiah 31:8,9 Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.
 1. He falls by the sword.
 2. He has "young men"- an army.
 3. He will have a strong hold that he will seek refuge in when the Lord attacks him.
16. Ezekiel 31:2-18 ("Assyrian", Pharaoh)
 1. Pharaoh is given as a type of the Antichrist- 31:2.
 2. The Antichrist (as his father Satan/Lucifer) was a magnificent being- until he rebelled.
 3. He lifted himself up in his pride- 31:10
 4. Armageddon and the birds eating them mentioned in 31:13 (Revelation 19:17,18).
 5. There will be mourning in the day of his destruction- 31:15.
 6. He will be cast into hell and will take many with him- 31:16,17.
 7. He is associated with Eden- 31:18.
17. Daniel 7:8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.
 1. He is called the "little horn".
 2. He plucks up 3 other horns at his rise.
 3. The horn had the eyes of a man.
 4. He speaks great things (in blasphemy).
18. Daniel 7:20-26
 1. Called a horn- 7:20,24.
 2. Three other horns fall before him- 7:20,24.
 1. These horns are kings- 7:24.
 3. His mouth speaks great things- 7:20,24.
 4. He has a stout look- 7:20.
 5. He makes war with the saints and prevails against them, but the eventually overcome him through the power of the Ancient of Days- 7:21,22.
 1. He will wear them out- 7:25.
 6. He shall think to change times and laws- 7:25. (This is not the pope supposedly changing the sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, as the Seventh Day Adventists claim! The Sabbath was never changed- it has always been and will always be Saturday.)
 7. His career lasts "a time, times and dividing of time", 3 1/2 of something (years)- 7:25.
 8. His dominion shall be taken away- 7:26.
19. Daniel 8:9-12 (Little horn)

1. He arises from one of the 4 segments of the empire of Alexander the Great (the he goat).
2. It waxed exceedingly great- 8:9,10.
3. He has his eye on the land to the south and east, toward the "pleasant land"- 8:9.
4. He cast down some out of the host of heaven-8:10.
5. He magnified himself- 8:11.
6. He causes the daily sacrifice to be taken away- 8:11.
20. Daniel 8:21-25 (Little horn) A continuation from Daniel 8:9-12.
 1. He is a king of fierce countenance- 8:23.
 2. He shall understand dark sayings- 8:23.
 3. He shall have mighty power, but not of himself- 8:24.
 1. He gets his power from Satan, just as Christ relied not on His own power but on the power of the Spirit.
 4. He shall destroy the holy people- 8:24.
 5. He shall prosper- 8:24.
 6. He will magnify himself- 8:25.
 7. He shall destroy many by peace- 8:25.
 8. He will stand up against the "Prince of princes" but will be destroyed- 8:25.
21. Daniel 11:2-45
 1. This is a detailed account of the career of the Antichrist before his destruction.
22. Micah 5:5,6 And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.
 1. When the Antichrist invades Israel, 7 "shepherds" (religious men) and 8 "principal men" (probably military and political men) shall rise up to lead the opposition to him.
 2. "He" shall deliver us..." (5:6). Who is this singular person? It must be Christ.
23. Zechariah 11:16,17 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.
 1. The Antichrist is the "Idol Shepherd", the Bad Shepherd, who is everything that a godly shepherd should not be.
 1. He will not visit those who need it.
 2. He does not seek the flock.
 3. He does not heal.
 4. He does not feed.
 5. He leaves the flock.
 2. He has a bad right eye and a bad right arm.
24. Matthew 24:5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
 1. The Antichrist will claim to be God and he will deceive many.
 2. The Antichrist will come in the name of Christ.
25. Matthew 24:23-24 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

1. The Antichrist and his followers will be able to do great signs and wonders and shall deceive everyone, except the saved.
26. John 6:70,71 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.
 1. Judas is called "a devil".
 2. There is a very good chance that Judas will be the Antichrist in resurrected form.
27. John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.
 1. Judas is called the "Son of Perdition".
28. Acts 13:6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus:
 1. This false prophet is interesting:
 1. He is a Jew.
 2. "Bar-jesus" means "Son of Jesus".
29. 2 Thessalonians 2:3,4,8,9
 1. The Antichrist is called the "Man of Sin"- 2:3.
 2. He is called "The Son of Perdition"- 2:3.
 3. He will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped- 2:4.
 4. He will claim to be God by sitting in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God- 2:4.
 5. He is called "that Wicked"- 2:8.
 6. He will be revealed- he has a revelation, just like Christ- 2:8.
 7. The Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming- 2:8.
 8. When he comes, he does so after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders- 2:9.
30. 1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.
31. 1 John 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.
 1. The Antichrist denies the Father and the Son, as do his followers, even today.
32. 1 John 3:12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.
 1. Cain is a type of the Antichrist. He is from that "wicked one".
33. 1 John 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.
 1. The Antichrist will deny the coming of Christ in the flesh.
34. 2 John 7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.
 1. The Antichrist is a deceiver.
 2. He will not confess that Christ is come in the flesh.
35. Revelation 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
 1. This is Antichrist, not Christ, who makes his appearance not too long

- after the rapture of Revelation 4.
 - 2. He mimics Christ (white horse and peace) so well that he fools everyone except the elect.
 - 3. He comes in peace (a bow but no arrow) but has war in his heart (the bow).
 - 4. He has a crown, denoting Kingship, but this crown was given to him, showing his authority comes from another.
 - 5. He goes to conquer by peace.
36. Revelation 13:1-8
- 1. The beast from the Sea- 13:1.
 - 2. Has 7 heads and 10 horns, with names of blasphemy- 13:1.
 - 1. The horns are kings- Revelation 17:12.
 - 3. He is compared to three animals:
 - 1. Leopard
 - 1. Swiftness in conquering.
 - 2. Integration- black/white/brown.
 - He will appeal to all races and cultures
 - 2. Bear
 - 1. Crushes opponents under his feet.
 - 3. Lion
 - 1. Crushes opponents by his mouth.
 - 4. He has a deadly head wound healed- 13:3.
 - 5. All the world wondered after the beast and worshipped him- 13:4.
 - 1. Only the damned will worship him- 13:8.
 - 6. He had a mouth that spoke great things and blasphemies- 13:5,6.
 - 7. He continues for 42 months- 13:5.
 - 8. He makes war with the saints and overcomes them- 13:7.
37. Revelation 13:15-18
- 1. An image of the beast will be constructed (Daniel 2).
 - 2. The Antichrist will have a mark that will be administered on the forehead or the right hand 13:16.
 - 1. On Ash Wednesday, the Roman Catholic priest puts a black spot on either your FOREHEAD or on your RIGHT HAND.
 - 3. The Antichrist also has a number- 666.
38. Revelation 16:10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,
- 1. He has a kingdom and he has a seat (or capital or center of operations).
39. Revelation 16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.
- 1. He sends out unclean spirits that do miracles and that deceive those on the earth.
40. Revelation 17:8,10-14
- 1. The Antichrist was, and is not (and shall yet be) 17:8,11.
 - 2. He shall ascend out of the bottomless pit- 17:8.
 - 1. He was in the bottomless pit and shall ascend out of it.
 - 3. He shall go into perdition- 17:8.
 - 4. Everyone on earth (the damned) shall wonder after him- 17:8.
 - 5. The kings of the earth shall give their power to the Antichrist- 17:13.
 - 6. The Antichrist and his followers will make war with the Lamb but He shall overcome them- 17:14.
41. Revelation 19:19,20

1. Battle of Armageddon.
 2. He is cast alive into the lake of fire (not hell)-19:20.
3. Comparison and Contrast Between Christ and Antichrist
1. Jesus is the King of Kings (Revelation 19) Satan is "king over all the children of pride" (Job 41)
 2. God is Light and in Him is no darkness (1 John 1:5) Satan appears as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:11-13)
 3. Christ has a bride, who is a city (Revelation 21:9) Satan has a bride, who is a city (Revelation 17:1-9)
 4. Both Christ and Satan quote Scripture (Luke 4:1-10)
 5. Christ preaches 42 months (Luke 3:23; John 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 12:1) The Beast preaches 42 months (Revelation 13:5)
 6. "Christ" means "anointed" (Acts 4:26; Psalm 2:2) Satan is anointed as a "Christ" (Ezekiel 28:14; Matthew 24:5)
 7. God desires (and deserves!) worship (John 4:23-26) Satan desires worship (Matthew 4:8-10)
 8. Christ has ministers, Satan has ministers
4. Types of the Antichrist
1. Cain
 1. 1 John 3:12, born of that wicked one
 2. Has a mark
 2. Nimrod
 1. Genesis 10
 2. Name means "rebellion"
 3. Was a hunter
 3. Pharaoh
 1. Ezekiel 29:3, called a dragon
 2. He persecutes Israel
 3. His profession is "I know not the LORD"
 4. Sennacherib
 1. His army destroyed by the angel of the Lord (2 Kings 19:16,35)
 2. He attacks Jerusalem, leaves and returns, giving those in Judea a chance to flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:16)
 5. Balak
 1. Numbers 22-25
 2. He gets Israel to corrupt themselves with Baal worship
 3. His prophet is Balaam (a Satanic trinity Father/Baal, Son/Balak, False Prophet/Balaam)
 6. Sisera
 1. A Gentile king defeated at Megiddo
 2. The stars in their courses fight from heaven against him (Judges 5:19,20)
 3. He is killed by a blow on the head (Genesis 3:15; Judges 5:26)
 7. Abimelech
 1. A rebel who sets himself up as king (Judges 9)
 2. Killed by a blow to the head
 8. Solomon (both a type of Christ and Antichrist)
 1. His number is 666 (2 Chronicles 9:13) with 6 lions and 6 steps near his throne
 2. He is King of Israel who apostasizes
 9. Ahab
 1. Has priests who wear vestments, come from the apostate tribe of Dan and who called the priest Father (Judges 17,18; 2 Kings 10:22)

- 2. Marries Jezebel (Revelation 17)
- 10. Goliath
 - 1. A mutant
 - 2. Killed by a head wound
 - 3. He has 6 pieces of armor and has 6 fingers and toes.
 - 4. Is killed by David, a type of Christ
- 11. Saul
 - 1. A demonic
 - 2. The people's choice as king, a populist
 - 3. Usurped the priest's office
 - 4. Hates David, a type of Christ
- 12. Absalom
 - 1. Name means "Father of Peace"
 - 2. Obtains the kingdom by flatteries (2 Sam 15:2-6; Dan 8:25; 11:24)
 - 3. Rebels against David, a type of Christ
 - 4. He is perfect in beauty (2 Sam 14:25,26; Ezekiel 28:15) showing he was very vain, proud and arrogant
- 13. Haman
 - 1. Is called an adversary, which is what "Satan" means (Esther 7:6)
 - 2. Plots to destroy Israel
 - 3. He is hung, like Judas and Absalom
- 14. Nabal
 - 1. Enemy of David
 - 2. He knows not David (Christ) (1 Sam 25:10)
- 15. Jeroboam
 - 1. Establishes Baal worship where men kiss the idols (1 Kings 12:25-33; 19:18; Hosea 13:2)
 - 2. He has a bad arm (Zech 11:16,17)
- 16. Judas
 - 1. He hangs, as Haman and Absalom
 - 2. He is very close to Christ. No one suspected his true nature until it was too late.
 - 3. Is called the Son of Perdition and a devil (John 6:70,71)
 - 4. He goes to his own place at death (2 Sam 18:18; Acts 1:25)
 - 5. Is a Moabite (his name Iscariot means "A man of Kerioth", which is in Moab) (Jer 48:2,10,15,24,41)
 - 6. Will be the Antichrist raised from "his own place". As Christ was raised from the dead, so shall Antichrist be.
- 17. Herod
 - 1. Usurps God's voice and does not give Him the glory (Acts 12:22,23)
- 18. Nebuchadnezzar
 - 1. Builds an image (Dan 3) that is 60x6x6 cubits with 6 instruments used after saying that he set it up 6 times
 - 2. Is King of Babylon (Rev 17)
 - 3. Is called a dragon (Jer 51:34)
 - 4. Becomes a literal beast for 7 years (Daniel 4)
- 5. Summary on the Antichrist
 - 1. He is a prince (Dan 9:26; John 16:11)
 - 2. He is a king (Dan 8:21,23)
 - 3. He is the he-goat (Dan 8:21)
 - 4. He is the little horn (Dan 7:8)

5. He is the King of the North (Dan 11)
 6. He is a king of fierce countenance (Dan 8:23)
 7. He is called antichrist (1 John 4:3)
 8. He is call the man of sin
 9. He is called the son of perdition
 10. He is called the Assyrian
 11. He is called the beast
6. Now, seeing all of this Biblical revelation of the Antichrist, who could possibly say with a straight face that Nero, Hitler, Kissinger, Saddam Hussein or Mussolini was the Antichrist?

2 John

Author- The Apostle John, “The Elder” for both epistles.

Date- Cannot be nailed down with any certainty, but probably near the time of the writing of 1 John, probably in the 80s.

Background Second John is a letter to a local congregation “the “elect lady”, warning them about the danger of false teachers (the Gnostics in this context, see notes above) and how to respond to them.

Themes

- The danger of the Gnostic heresy and how to meet it and what to do about it.
- The responsibility of Christian hospitality.
- What constitutes the Biblical basis for fellowship- truth, and nothing else, not even love.
- The necessity of the practice of separation.

Place Written From Unknown. Tradition places John as the pastor of the church at Ephesus in his latter years, so Ephesus is the best candidate. Ephesus would be a good candidate since it was the intellectual center of Asia Minor and would be an important city for such a church to be planted. Paul had prophesied earlier in Acts 20:28-31 that false teachers would arise in this church and that came true in John’s day with the advent of the Gnostics in Ephesus and in Asia Minor.

There are no geographic references in the epistles that help us to identify an audience or a source of the epistles.

Names and Titles of Christ in 2 John

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Lord Jesus Christ 3 | 4. The Son 9 |
| 2. Son of the Father 3 | 5. Christ 9 |
| 3. Jesus Christ 7 | |

Names and Titles of God in 2 John

1. Father 3,9

1. Introduction 1-3

1 ¶ The elder^a unto the elect lady^b and her children, whom I love in the truth;^c and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;^d

1a This is John, who was quite aged by this writing (probably 70-80 years old) and the only surviving apostle. John also uses this title for himself in 3 John 1. The title “the Elder” was a term of endearment used by and of John. John doesn’t identify himself by name as the author of any of his books except Revelation. His gospel was a historical book and these kinds of books don’t have the author’s name on them. Prophetic books do carry the author’s name, as Revelation does of John, as it is important to know who was giving the prophecies involved.

1b It is unsure as to whether John refers to a literal, individual Christian lady or a specific local congregation. I tend to think he is writing to a congregation of believers rather than an individual. It could also refer to an individual lady who was a member of the congregation John was writing to. “Elect lady” what a noble title this is! If John is writing to a local church, then he refers to that

church as a “lady”, not just a “woman”. She is dignified, has Biblical culture, self-respect and manners.

1c Love must be based on truth. The same also is true for fellowship, as you cannot fellowship what you do not love. Charismatics, compromisers and ecumenists often try to base fellowship on love rather than truth (or doctrine) and they end up fellowshipping every foul and unclean bird while rejecting genuine Bible-believers. You must have doctrine to establish fellowship and love.

1d There is only one truth, not multiple truths. There is not a Baptist truth, a Pentecostal truth, a Calvinistic truth, a Roman Catholic truth- only one “truth”. Truth is exclusive and intolerant. Error tends to be more accommodating.

2 For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us,^a and shall be with us for ever.

2a Truth dwells in us. As the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, and as the Holy Spirit is truth (1 John 5:6), the truth then dwells in us in and through the person of the Holy Spirit.

2b The security of the believer. Once saved, the Holy Spirit will not leave the believer. Backslidings and carnality “quenches” the Spirit but He does not leave. As long as the Spirit indwells us, then the truth will also indwell us. This is a confident assertion on John’s part, not just a fanciful wish.

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

2. Love- The Old Commandment 4-6

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

4a Expressions of thankful joy are common in Paul’s greetings, as in his introductions Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians and Philemon. There is no such greeting in Galatians since Paul is upset with their defection from the gospel of grace.

4b This brings no greater joy to a preacher, to see people he has ministered to (especially if they are young converts) going on with God in the truth. The opposite is also true. Nothing breaks a preacher’s heart more than to see people falling away from the truth, especially if they have sat under his ministry for any length of time.

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

5a This commandment is repeated from John 13:34; 15:12 and 1 John 2:17; 3:23.

5b This is the divine love of the apage, not the human brotherly love of the phileo. We love as God loves, not because of some good thing we see in that person or because they are physically attractive to us or because we hope to get something from them. That is now how God loves. He loves because it is His nature to love. This is an impossible way for us to love, naturally, unless we have the help from the indwelling Holy Spirit.

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

6a The test of true love to God is if we are keeping His commandments (John 14:15,21). How can we claim to love God if we are rebelling against the commandments that He gave us, to help us in ordering our lives and walk with Him?

3. Warning Against Deceivers 7-9

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

7a We get our word "planet" from this, which is a wandering star. Since these "planets" have no fixed location in the sky, they are useless for navigation. Since false teachers wander everywhere theologically, they are also useless for finding truth. There were many such deceivers in John's day, and we know that their numbers and influence have only increased in our day and will continue to do so as we draw closer to the end of the age. The Lord warned of these deceivers, mainly in a tribulation context, in Matthew 24:5,24. John also warns against them in 1 John 4:1, so none of this revelation regarding false teachers is new and no Christian has any excuse to be ignorant about this threat or of their methods of operation.

7b The definition of a "deceiver" and "antichrist" in this context is one who denies the incarnation of Christ. John has the Gnostics in view here, who denied that Christ had a human body, as they believed that "spirit" could not co-exist with evil "flesh". Cultists and false teachers usually err somewhere on the doctrine of Christ.

1. Mormons say Christ and Lucifer were brothers.
2. Jehovah Witnesses say Christ was not fully God.
3. Christian Scientists deny the deity of Christ.

John has the Gnostics in mind as he writes this, as Gnosticism was a major problem in the early church. Gnosticism can be defined as salvation by knowledge, based on the etymology of the word (gnosis "knowledge", gnostikos, "good at knowing"). Gnostics were "people who knew", and their knowledge at once constituted them a superior class of beings, whose present and future status was essentially different from that of those who, for whatever reason, did not know. When Gnosticism came into contact with Christianity, which must have happened very early in Church History, it immediately adopted much Christian thought and terminology. It acknowledged Jesus as Savior of the world, copies Christian ordinances, pretended to be an esoteric revelation of Christ and the apostles, and flooded the world with apocryphal Gospels to substantiate its doctrines. As Christianity grew, Gnosticism spread and claimed to be the only true form of Christianity, unfit, indeed, for the vulgar crowd, but set apart for the gifted and the elect. In this form, Gnosticism is very similar to freemasonry today. So strong was the threat that the Fathers devoted their energies to countering it.

7c “Antichrist” is someone opposed to Christ. Anyone who denies or attacks the doctrine of the incarnation is attacking the person and work of Christ, as any false teacher will do. If you are not for Christ, then you are against Him, and thus earn the label of an “antichrist”. John does not have “The Antichrist” in view here, but we have no doubt that when he appears, he will attack every cardinal doctrine regarding the person and work of Christ.

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

8a Apostasy and compromise can destroy and undermine any and all spiritual progress you may have made in your life. The ultimate loss of these rewards would take place at the judgment seat, when we are judged for our Christian lives and ministries. To begin well in the Christian life is important, but it is much more important to finish well and faithful. By abandoning the truth and compromising, we can undo all that we have done and undermine all the good that we may have wrought up to that point.

8b This reward comes at the bema seat. To receive a full reward is for us to receive all that we have earned and to lose none of it through unfaithfulness or apostasy. This does not apply to salvation, for that cannot be lost. But the rewards that make up the quality of our salvation can be lost. Going into apostasy will cost you at the judgment. The deceiver is a thief who will rob you of rewards in glory. There is the hope expressed by the subjunctive voice of the verb that we “might receive” these rewards. It is not certain that we will as there is always the possibility of apostasy or falling away. We do not hold to the possibility of the loss of salvation if one is genuinely saved, but the loss of rewards is a specter that always looms over us.

A Christian can lose many things:

1. His testimony Genesis 19:14
2. His health 1 Corinthians 11:29,30
3. His rewards 1 Corinthians 3:15
4. His millennial inheritance Colossians 3:24,25
5. His joy Psalm 51:12
6. His assurance 1 John 3:20-22
7. His life 1 Corinthians 10:10,11

But not his salvation

9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ,^a hath not God.^b He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.^c

9a What is this doctrine? Whatever the Bible teaches about the person and work of Christ. If we hold to the orthodox doctrines of Christ as revealed in Scripture, then “we have God” and are in fellowship with Him. All false teachers and cults will be in error on some point regarding the doctrine of Christ.

1. Mormons consider Christ and Satan to be brothers
2. Jehovah Witnesses view Christ as a demigod, as taught by Arianism
3. Christian Scientists deny the deity of Christ
4. Oneness Pentecostals deny the trinity, identifying Jesus with both the Father and the Holy Spirit.
5. Unitarians deny the trinity and are very weak on the deity of Christ, if they hold to the doctrine at all

- 6. The Roman Catholic Church elevates Mary almost to the same level as Christ, thus weakening Him as the sole mediator between God and man
- 7. Any group that denies the trinity also ends up attacking the doctrine of Christ.

9b See 1 John 2:23. Two things identify the man who does not have God:

1. He who transgresses. "To step over, or deliberately cross over the line". The man who deliberately sin and step over the line that God has drawn in their life, either practically or doctrinally, does not have God and is not saved. God gives the Christian the victory over his sin and he will no longer habitually practice them as he used to while he was yet unsaved. We are not talking about the occasional sin that every Christian is guilty of, but of the deliberate, willful, habitual practice of sin in full knowledge of what God says about that sin and with a full rejection of the means provided for by God to avoid that sin. This man is not saved for he does not have God. He also transgresses the doctrine of Christ as he rejects it and steps over it unto something else. You can transgress doctrinally as well as practically.

2. He who abides not in the doctrine of Christ. We have already discussed this man as John identified him as an antichrist in verse 7. How could an antichrist be saved? A man who rejects the Biblical doctrine of Christ is not saved since he has placed himself into deliberate opposition to the doctrine of Christ, and thus to the person and saving work of Christ.

Is this man lost? Yes. Romans 8:9 says that if we have not the Spirit of God then we are none of His. That man does not belong to God. Thus he is not saved. If a man does not have God, especially the Holy Spirit indwelling in his life as all Christians have, then he cannot be saved. A saved man has God and he also belongs to God. Conversely, the unsaved man does not enjoy such a relationship.

9c This is the opposite of the unsaved man above. A Christian abides in the doctrine of Christ. He accepts the Biblical revelation of what the Bible says about Christ. He then has both the Father and the Son, and they own him as well. Salvation then centers around an acceptance of the doctrine of Christ as the Bible reveals it.

4. Christology as a Test of Fellowship 10,11

10 ¶ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine,^a receive him not into your house,^b neither bid him God speed:^c

10a This will happen. You will come into contact with a man claiming to be a Christian. When you search him out, you will find that his Christology is flawed. You are then to break fellowship with that man. Some examples of how this will happen:

1. Two Jehovah Witnesses knock on your door. You ask them if they believe that Jesus is God. They will say that He is a created being and is a "god", or a demigod. By this confession, they acknowledge that they are deceivers and antichrists. You are not to allow them into your home but politely ask them to leave and to stop bothering you.

2. Two Mormons knock on your door (probably 19-year old "elders"!). You ask them of their doctrine of Christ. They may indeed admit that Jesus is God but He is not the only God. They are polytheistic, thus robbing Jesus of His uniqueness. After all, man may also ascend to godhood one day just as Jesus did. So their Christology is most unorthodox and they too are to be dismissed.

3. You go to a political conference that is strongly conservative and the keynote speaker is Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church. He wants you to help him to "reclaim America" and to defeat Communism. You must reject any fellowship or cooperation with

because he teaches that Jesus failed on the cross and that God appeared to him in Korea and appointed him to be the new Messiah, to finish the work that Jesus started but failed. What a nut. His Christology is way out beyond left field. You must reject him as well.

4. Christian Science must also fall under this condemnation because they also reject just about every point of orthodox Christology.

5. We must reject Roman Catholic Christology since it portrays Christ as not the sole, sufficient Savior, but enshrines Mary as the co-mediatrix. Mary is elevated to the level of deity, thus robbing Christ of His uniqueness. We therefore cannot fellowship with Roman Catholicism.

10b There were many traveling false teachers in the early church. They would go from town to town, looking for a sympathetic ear and for an offering. Since there were no motels in this day, traveling preachers would be lodged in the homes of saints. A true teacher was to be extended this Christian courtesy. But if he is a false teacher, who denies the doctrine of Christ, he is to receive no such consideration from the saints. They are not to be entertained nor are they to be encouraged or supported by the saints, but they are to be turned out and turned away. Better to let them starve in the streets. That might be one way to put an end to their damnable “ministries”!

10c We are not even to wish the apostate “Good bye” or “Good day” when he stands at our door. The next time a Mormon or Jehovah Witness stands at your door, be polite but firm. Do NOT allow him into your home. Ask him to remove himself from your property. Then do NOT tell him “good bye” or “have a nice day”. They are to be marked as apostates and avoided by God’s people (Romans 16:17) are to be turned away from (2 Timothy 3:5) and rejected (Titus 3:10).

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

11a You identify with his evil deeds if you offer him support or encouragement.

5. Conclusion 12,13

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

12a Some things just can’t be said in a letter but should be said face-to-face. We don’t know what John still wanted to relate but it was either too important or too personal to write down.

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

Observations regarding “truth”:

1. “Men of truth” were sought to be judges in Israel- Exodus 18:21
2. God is abundant in truth- Exodus 34:6
3. God is a God of Truth- Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5; Isaiah 65:16
4. God is to be served in truth- Joshua 24:14; 1 Samuel 12:24
5. Exhortation to walk with God in truth- 1 Kings 2:4; 2 Kings 20:3; Psalm 86:11; Isaiah 38:3; 2 John 4; 3 John 3,4
6. Dwelling with God requires speaking truth Psalm 15:2

7. All the paths of the LORD are truth- Psalm 25:10; Psalm 119:30 (way of truth); 2 Peter 2:2
8. All of God's works are done in truth- Psalm 33:4; Daniel 4:37
9. God's truth can preserve us- Psalm 40:11; Proverbs 20:28
10. God wants truth in our inward parts- Psalm 51:6
11. Mercy is associated with truth- Psalm 85:10
12. God is full of truth- Psalm 86:15
13. God will judge the world in truth- Psalm 96:13
14. God's truth is eternal- Psalm 100:5
15. The Bible as the word of truth- Psalm 119:43; John 17:17; 2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 1:13
16. God's law is truth- Psalm 119:142
17. God's commandments are truth- Psalm 119:151
18. Truth can be bought and has a price- Proverbs 22:21; 23:23
19. Truth is fallen in the street in Isaiah's day- Isaiah 59:14,15
20. Valiant for truth- Jeremiah 9:3
21. Christ is full of truth- John 1:14
22. Truth came by Christ- John 1:17
23. Worship must be in truth- John 4:23,24
24. The truth shall make us free- John 8:32
25. Satan has no association with truth- John 8:44
26. Christ is the truth- John 14:6
27. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth- John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13
28. Sanctification through the truth- John 17:17,19
29. We can do nothing against the truth- 2 Corinthians 13:8
30. Truth is a fruit of the Spirit- Ephesians 5:9
31. Loins gird about with truth in the Christian armor- Ephesians 6:14
32. Damnation is the judgment for those who do not obey the truth- 2 Thessalonians 2:12
33. Election seems to be dependent upon belief in the truth- 2 Thessalonians 2:13
34. God wants all men to come to a knowledge of the truth- 1 Timothy 2:14
35. The church is the pillar and ground of truth- 1 Timothy 3:15
36. The word of truth needs to be rightly divided- 2 Timothy 2:15
37. Some men are unable to come to a knowledge of the truth- 2 Timothy 3:7
38. The Holy Spirit teaches us truth- 1 John 2:27
39. Love must be in truth- 1 John 3:18; 2 John 1; 3 John 1
40. There is a spirit of truth- 1 John 4:6
41. The Holy Spirit is truth- 1 John 5:6
42. The truth abides in us- 2 John 2
43. Fellowhelpers to the truth- 3 John 8

3 John

Author The Apostle John, "The Elder".

Date Cannot be nailed down with any certainty, but probably near the time of the writing of 1 John, probably in the 80s.

Background Third John is written to Gaius to both encourage him and his good ministry, as well as to deal with the problems that Diotrephes was causing in the local church.

Themes

The responsibility of Christian hospitality.

Dealing with a troublemaker in the church in 3 John.

What constitutes the Biblical basis for fellowship- truth, and nothing else, not even love.

The necessity of the practice of separation.

Place Written From

Unknown. Tradition places John as the pastor of the church at Ephesus in his latter years, so Ephesus is the best candidate. Ephesus would be a good candidate since it was the intellectual center of Asia Minor and would be an important city for such a church to be planted. Paul had prophesied earlier in Acts 20:28-31 that false teachers would arise in this church and that came true in John's day with the advent of the Gnostics in Ephesus and in Asia Minor.

There are no geographic references in the epistles that help us to identify an audience or a source of the epistles.

1. Introduction 1-4

1 The elder^a unto the wellbeloved Gaius,^b whom I love in the truth.^{c-d}

1a "The elder" The Apostle John, as this title is also used in 2 John 1. John, as the only surviving original apostle who would have been well advanced in years by this writing, would naturally have been looked upon as The Elder. His name would have not been necessary as everyone would have known who The Elder was in this day. In earlier days, Peter called himself an elder in 1 Peter 5:1.

1b We do not know exactly who this Gaius is, as this was a rather common name in this day. There are five men so named in the New Testament:

1. Romans 16:23, Paul mentions a Gaius who lived at Corinth, whom he calls his host, and the host of the whole Church.
2. In 1 Corinthians 1:14, Paul mentions a Gaius who lived at Corinth, whom he had baptized; but this is probably the same with the above.
3. In Acts 19:29, mention is made of a Gaius who was a native of Macedonia, who accompanied Paul, and spent some time with him at Ephesus. This is probably a different person from the preceding; for the description given of the Gaius who lived at Corinth, and was the host of the whole Church there, does not accord with the description of the Macedonian Gaius, who, in the very same year, traveled with Paul, and was with him at Ephesus.
4. In Acts 20:4, we meet a Gaius of Derbe, who was likewise a fellow traveler of Paul. This person cannot be the Corinthian Gaius, for the host of the Church at Corinth would

hardly leave that city to travel into Asia: and he is clearly distinguishable from the Macedonian Gaius.

5. And lastly, there is the Gaius who is mentioned here, and who is thought by some critics to be different from all the above; for, in writing to him, John ranks him among his children, which seems, according to them, to intimate that he was converted by this apostle.

1c This phrase is used in verses 3, 4 and 8. Christian love and fellowship must always be based upon the Truth as revealed and preserved within the Word of God. There is no other source of truth. Fellowship cannot be based on love or mutual goals or a desire for an unbiblical ecumenism.

Evangelicals and Charismatics base their fellows on love instead of truth and end up with a magpie's nest of error. Such fellowships are Satanic since they are not Biblical. The only basis we have to fellowship with other believers and churches is if they are holding to the fundamental truths as revealed in Scripture. If they are not then we cannot fellowship with them.

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

2a John's two requests for Gaius:

1. That he prosper as his soul prospers. This deals with spiritual prosperity, a good heart with God.
2. That he would be "in heath" or be healthy physically.

Both are wishes, something John desires. They are not stated as doctrinal truth.

2b Charismatics and Prosperity Preachers use this as a proof text to promote their heresy that "God wants all of His children healthy, wealthy and happy." It is obvious that the Charismatic is carnal and fleshly, for they care more for the body than they do the soul. God often times will honor His highest saints with suffering, yea, even physical suffering. This is simply a desire on the part of John for the wellbeing of Gaius. Friends use a similar greeting all the time, as we will wish someone health and prosperity. That doesn't mean that they are always going to get it but it is our desire that the Lord will bless them. John desires Gaius to be as physically healthy as he was spiritually healthy. Don't pray that for some Christians! Their situation is the opposite of Gaius'- they are strong as an ox physically and as weak as a mouse spiritually. It should be the other way around. You have little control over some areas of physical health but you have much more control over the health of your soul, which is far more important. You can go to heaven with a broken body but not with a diseased soul. The physical body must be cared for as it is the temple of the Holy Spirit, but its physical health has no bearing on your eternal destiny. Instead of spending hundreds of dollars on exercise machines and health club fees, why not put that money in building a library of Christian classics to feed your soul, and invest the rest into kingdom work? That will provide for the spiritual health of your soul.

The main reason why Christians still suffer poverty and illness is because we will not come into the full and absolute enjoyment of our salvation, and all the benefits that come from it, until we reach the Millennium and receive our new, sinless glorified bodies. Until then, we still live in a body that has already suffered the ravages of sin and we still live in a sinful, cursed world. As long as we are in such an environment and live in such a body, we can still expect doctor's bills and light bills. Our physical bodies were made from the dust of the ground that God cursed back in Genesis 3 because of sin.

3 For I rejoiced greatly,^a when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

3a A good report from a far country is like cold water to a thirsty soul (Proverbs 25:25). Such news about a brother and a church cannot but gladden the heart of any child of God, especially a preacher. And Gaius had a very good reputation among the brethren.

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

4a John's greatest joy was to know that his spiritual children were being faithful to the truth of God that he had delivered unto them. Earthy parents would understand this as we have the same joy when we see our children walking in the truth we taught them. We would think then that John had led Gaius to a saving faith in Christ and was his spiritual father in the same way that Timothy and Titus were the spiritual children of Paul. What greater reason to rejoice than this? John's spiritual children love the truth and are walking in the truth. It does good to the heart of a preacher and pastor, not to mention a missionary, to see other Christians, especially those whom he pointed to the Savior of those he ministered unto or disciplined, walking in truth. That makes our ministry and our efforts worthwhile, in a horizontal sense.

John's greatest joy was not in a growing church membership (numbers-wise) or hitting his goal on a "big day" or getting invited to the White House or being invited to open the legislature in prayer at the state capitol or any of these things. His greatest joy was that his spiritual children were faithful to the truth and were patterning their lives after the truth that he, and the other apostles and preachers had delivered to them. This would gladden the heart of any preacher.

2. Commendation for Gaius 5,6

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;^a

5a John lets Gaius know that he has heard good things about him. John commends Gaius for his charity and Christian hospitality toward strangers. Such charity towards traveling Christians and evangelists was very important in this day. Since there were no hotels or motels as we know them today, traveling teachers were often lodged in private homes. There were inns but most of them were filthy and many of them nothing more than houses of ill-repute, certainly no place for a Christian. Traveling Christian evangelists and teachers were put up in the homes of Christians as they passed through or ministered in the area. But whenever traveling Christians passed through Gaius' town, he went out of his way to receive them into his home and provide them with as much hospitality as he could. For these efforts, John gave him gold stars with oak leaf clusters.

6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church:^a whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

6a The "church" (local churches) in this day met in private homes. Here, the building is not meant so much as is the congregation that is the church.

3. Christian Hospitality 7,8

7 Because that for his name's sake^a they went forth,^b taking nothing of the Gentiles.^c

7a "For his name's sake" These preachers went out in Jesus' name and thus, should be supported by Jesus' people since they are involved in Jesus' work. Such people are worthy of the support of the Church.

7b These travelling evangelists, because of the hospitality of Christians like Gaius, did not have to go and take any support from the unsaved Gentiles. They did not have to beg or to work a secular job or stay in an inn because Christians like Gaius made it their business to make sure they were well provided for and had what they needed. This certainly is a ministry of helps which is needed even in our own day.

7c We think about this today, of how churches, ministries and preachers are to be supported in their work. It certainly shouldn't be by "taking of the Gentiles" or from the world and unsaved people. We are not to be looking toward Washington or the unsaved to finance our kingdom activities. Churches that seek after and accept government money (taking of the Gentiles) wrap themselves in Caesar's web from which they may never escape. Nor are we to be using bond programs, car washes, selling candy door-to-door, oyster suppers, church bazaars and what not to finance the Church. Only by the giving of God's people and the divine provision of God is the Church financed. This is the only pure way to fund God's work. Woe to the Church that must go to the Gentiles for the money and support that they ought to be receiving from God's people!

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

8a There is no reason why we cannot fulfill a similar type of ministry in our own day whenever missionaries, preachers, evangelists or fellow Christians are passing through our town. Are they not worthy of our hospitality? If we have the space in our homes, why not turn it into a "prophet's chamber"? This way, they would not have to spend \$200 a night for a motel room that pumps pornographic movies into the room. They can save that money and enjoy Christian fellowship instead. Every church ought to have such a "safe haven" for these traveling brethren. By undertaking such a ministry, we may also be fellowhelpers to the truth" and receive a share of their reward for assisting them in their ministry.

4. Condemnation for Diotrephes 9,10

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

9a John wrote a letter to this church but it is probable that they never received it, because Diotrephes would have intercepted it and placed it in File 13 (or the "circular file)." We do not know what position in the church Diotrephes occupied but it seems to have been one of some authority. Unfortunately, men like Diotrephes are in many churches. They are characterized by the fact that the "love to have the preeminence". They have to be first. They have to be important. I don't think Diotrephes was the pastor, otherwise who would have been lusting after

this preeminence. He may have been just a common member or possibly a deacon who thought that he was really the one running the church or that he could do a better job of it than the pastor. Whatever his reason, he took this authority upon himself to make such decisions, probably usurping it from the legitimate authority in the church. He would not recognize John nor the men whom John commended to the church. John would write to the church "Brother So-and-So is a worthy brother and a man of God and I recommend that your church take him on for support and extend to him Christian hospitality." Gaius would have obeyed such apostolic injunctions but not Diotrephes. He would have said "Who does John think he is? Just because he is an apostle, does he think he can boss us around? I run things around here and I will make the decisions who this church supports!" He was full of himself and thought that he deserved this sort of authority in the church. Diotrephes would have exerted his self-anointed authority over the divine apostolic authority of John. If Diotrephes could rule something, he would ruin it. If he got no recognition for doing something, he would make sure no one else would, either.

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

10a John knew all about Diotrephes and says that if he did come to the church, he would deal with this man in a public fashion. Public sins need to be dealt with publicly. John would not tolerate such spiritual insubordination in the church. No doubt Diotrephes was causing much grief in the assembly and the church was not able to overcome his influence. But John would handle things with the full apostolic authority he possessed if he got the chance. This is the only recorded instance where John flexed his apostolic muscle.

10b Publicly.

10c What was some of the things Diotrephes was guilty of?

1. He said prating against John and his company with malicious words. He would talk about everyone and against everyone. He was a master blasphemer.
2. He did not receive the brethren. He would not extend Christian hospitality toward them and would reject any and all letters of commendation about them. "He himself" did not do this, showing it was a deliberate and spiteful oversight on his part, not that he "forgot" or "was too busy" to do it.
3. He forbade them that would receive these brethren in the church. This opposition would have been directed against Gaius and others like him who were fulfilling their Christian obligations. Diotrephes had no intention of extending Christian hospitality and had no intention of allowing anyone else to do so.
4. He cast them out of the church. Diotrephes cast these travelling Christians out of the church or those who attempted to extend the hospitality that Diotrephes forbade? I find it hard that Diotrephes would have managed to amass such power that he alone could excommunicate church members for such "offenses" as not obeying his will or daring to cross him. He no doubt would have liked to do it if he could. I would interpret this to mean that he cast out these visitors to the church. Men like Gaius would say "Sure Brother, you can use our prophet's chamber!" As soon as Gaius would leave, Diotrephes would come in and throw all their stuff out into the street because no one consulted him as to if it would be okay to use the prophet's chamber.

5. He didn't love the brethren but he did love the preeminence. All men are in love with something. He was basically in love with himself and it showed in his personality and character.

10d To talk idly and at length; chatter, to utter idly or to little purpose, empty, foolish, or trivial talk; idle chatter. From the Middle English "praten".

5. Separation Enjoined 11

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good.^a e that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.^{a-b}

11b This verse would be applied to men like Diotrophes in the church. They must be cast out and excommunicated. Church discipline must be exercised against such men, lest the church and those within it are defiled from such a fellowship. Diotrophes was evil, therefore do not follow him nor fellowship him. This also means that Diotrophes was probably not saved, else he wouldn't have such a demonic attitude. Instead, put in a good man like Demetrius (verse 12) in his office and follow him instead.

11c "He that doeth evil..." This also applies to Diotrophes. He was evil and did evil, therefore he knew not God (probably was not saved) and therefore was spiritually unqualified for any leadership position, including ones he probably usurped, in the church. This would be another reason for his removal and excommunication if he did not repent.

6. Demetrius' Good Report 12

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

12a "Demetrius" means "belonging to Demeter (Ceres, god of agriculture), which probably means he was a convert from paganism. He was a good man and was everything Diotrophes wasn't. He would receive the brethren and lodge them in his house at his own expense and he didn't care if anyone patted him on the back for that or not. He did not insist on having his own way in the church. If he was voted down on something, he took it in stride with Christian grace. He was a man who loved the truth and the brethren more than self and that also manifested itself in his character and service.

7. Conclusion 13,14

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:

14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face.^a Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.^b

14a Some things just can't be said in a letter but should be said face-to-face. We don't know what John still wanted to relate but it was either too important or too personal to write down.

14b This and the epistle of James are the only epistles which are concluded without the word "Amen".

What is truth? (John 18:38)

1. God is a God of truth- Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5
2. God must be served in truth- Joshua 24:14; 1 Samuel 12:24
 - a. We cannot serve God if we are in error, either deliberately or ignorantly
3. Hezekiah walked before God in truth- 2 Kings 20:3; Isaiah 38:3
4. Hezekiah did truth before God- 2 Chronicles 31:20
5. In Nehemiah 9:13, the marginal reading for the commandments of God is "laws of truth".
 - a. God's law is truth- Psalm 119:142,151
6. The upright man speaks truth in his heart- Psalm 15:2
7. The judgments of God are true- Psalm 19:9
8. All the paths of God are truth- Psalm 25:10
9. God wants truth in the inward parts- Psalm 51:6
10. God's truth is our shield and buckler- Psalm 91:4
11. God shall judge in truth- Psalm 96:13
12. The truth of God is eternal- Psalm 100:5
13. The way of truth is to be chosen- Psalm 119:30; 2 Peter 2:2
14. Calling upon God in truth- Psalm 145:18
15. The preacher should seek out words of truth- Ecclesiastes 12:10
16. Truth is fallen in the streets- Isaiah 59:14
 - a. The situation in our day
17. The Lord lives in truth- Jeremiah 4:2
18. Few seek after truth- Jeremiah 5:1
19. The scripture of truth- Daniel 10:21
20. "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land."- Hosea 4:1
21. In the Millennium, Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth- Zechariah 8:3
22. Christ is full of truth- John 1:14
23. Truth came by Christ- John 1:17
24. God must be worshipped in truth- John 4:24
25. Truth can be known- John 8:32
26. Knowledge of the truth will make us free- John 8:32
27. The truth is not in Satan- John 8:44
28. Jesus is the truth- John 14:6
29. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth- John 15:26; 16:13
30. Sanctification through truth- John 17:17,19; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:22
31. Sinners changing the truth of God- Romans 1:25
32. Love rejoices in truth- 1 Corinthians 13:6
33. We can do nothing against the truth- 2 Corinthians 13:8
34. Enemies for the truth's sake- Galatians 4:16
35. One of the fruit of the Spirit is truth- Ephesians 5:9
36. "Loins girt about with truth" – Ephesians 6:14
37. Damnation caused by a refusal to believe, or accept, the truth- 2 Thessalonians 2:10,12
38. God wants all men to come to a knowledge of the truth- 1 Timothy 2:4

39. The church is the “ground” of the truth- 1 Timothy 3:15
40. The word of truth must be rightly divided- 2 Timothy 2:15
41. Some men are never able to come to a knowledge of the truth- 2 Timothy 3:7
42. The truth can be resisted- 2 Timothy 3:8
43. Love is based on truth- 1 John 3:18; 2 John 1; 3 John 1
44. Spirit of truth and spirit of error- 1 John 4:6
45. The Spirit is truth- 1 John 5:6
46. Preachers rejoice when their children walk in truth- 2 John 4; 3 John 4
47. Fellowhelpers to the truth- 3 John 8

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