

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

The history of John, the son of Zebedee, is given in the introduction to the Gospel of John. No one knows for sure when this Letter was written, but it is likely that John wrote his Gospel, 1, 2, 3 John, and Revelation, all in the last decade of the first century.

The apostles both believed and taught that Christ was *both* God and man, *both* divine and human! Two lines of false thinking grew out of distorting this fact. Some of the false teachers, finding that Messiah was called in the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament), *God*, and *the Son of God*, decided it was impossible that he could become a human being with a body like ours. They declared the divinity of Christ, but denied he came in human form. Therefore, they said, Christ only seemed to have a body, only seemed to suffer and die, and that he really did none of the things mentioned in the Gospels. *MacKnight* says: "By pretending that Christ suffered death only in appearance, the Docetae endeavored to avoid the ignominy of the crucifixion of their Master, and to free themselves from that obligation to suffer for their religion, which was laid on them both by Christ's precept and example." John makes it plain that those who deny the reality of Christ's humanity are *motivated* by the spirit of the Enemy of Christ (Antichrist)! See *1 John 4:2-3*.

Others of the false teachers believed all that was said about Jesus in the Gospels, but denied his divinity. They could not believe the Son of God could experience the things which happened to Jesus. Therefore they denied the *virgin birth* and said Jesus was completely human. They said that after his baptism, *the Christ* descended on him in the form of a dove and stayed with him during the work of his public ministry. Then, they said, *the Christ* left him, and Jesus suffered, died, was raised from death. But, they said, *the Christ* was not involved in this, since He is *Spirit*. John deals with the divinity of Christ (*1 John 2:22*) who *is* Jesus, and that *Christ* came through the blood of his death as well as the water of his baptism (*1 John 5:6; 2 John 7*).

These Letters of John, then, deal with the pre-existence of Jesus, the incarnation (becoming human), the real existence in human form, the actual death of Jesus the Christ in which his blood was poured out. Also, John deals with the theme of LOVE. Paul has shown us that the entire Christian life is *meaningless* without the reality of *love*! (See *1 Cor. ch 13.*) John goes deep into the nature of love and shows that to the degree that we *love*, we are like God *who is love*! This is in direct contrast to the false teachers, who taught and practiced a *loveless* intellectualism (*1 John 2:7-9; 3:10-18.*

John deals with three distortions of truth; (1) "If we can never be completely free from the act of sin in this life, why try to be holy?" (2) "Can one who is already a Christian be forgiven if he sins?" Some were saying that the only forgiveness was in the act of *new birth* (*John 3:5*), therefore they delayed their *act of new birth* until they had reached the point of death. (3) "If we can be forgiven every sin through *Christ-on-the-cross*, why not go ahead and sin, since forgiveness comes so easy?" These, then, are all topics which John deals with in this Letter.

THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

The Word of Life

1 We write to you about the Word of life, which has existed from the very beginning: we have heard it, and we have seen it with our eyes; yes, we have seen it, and our hands have touched it. **2** When this life became visible, we saw it; so we speak of it and tell you about the eternal life which was with the Father and was made known to us. **3** What we have seen and heard we tell to you also, so that you will join with us in the fellowship that we have with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** We write this in order that our joy may be complete.

God Is Light

5 Now this is the message that we have heard from his Son and announce to you: God is light

The Word of Life

1 That which was from the beginning, which we heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

Walking in the Light

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness

1. We write to you. Compare *John 20:30-31*. **The Word of life.** Jesus the Christ, who is the Eternal Logos. **From the very beginning.** Since the Logos is Eternal and existed before time began (*John 1:1*), we say with *MacKnight* that John has in mind the Word *becoming* a human being (*John 1:14*). John speaks as an *eyewitness!* John declares they have *heard it, seen it, touched it!* John and the other apostles saw Jesus baptized, saw the Spirit come down on him, his preaching, his miracles, his transfiguration, his agony in the garden, his suffering, and all the other things which demonstrated the reality of his life in human form.

2. Became visible. The Eternal Logos was not visible until he became a human being. **We saw it.** The apostles were eyewitnesses who were given a special mission. Compare *Acts 1:21-22*. **So we speak.** The mission of the apostles was to give proof of this Word of life. Compare *Acts 10:39-42*.

3. What we. Compare *Matt. 13:16*. John repeats himself to *guarantee* to us the reality of the Eternal Logos becoming a human being!!! **Fellowship.** Some belonged to secret fellowships and claimed special knowledge. John points out that he and the others have fellowship with the Father and the Son (see *verse 7* also), and that those who believe what he is saying may also become part of this fellowship.

4. In order. "These things, about our fellowship with the Father and the Son, we write to you who have joined with us in this fellowship, that you will make our joy complete by living in the truth of the Word of life!"

5. Now this is the message. "I want to show you the advantage of joining with us in this fellowship." **From his Son.** *The Christ* is the source of this message. Compare *Heb. 1:1-2* and notes. **God is light.** The ancients thought of light as the purest and most perfect of all material substance. The message that *God is light* says that He is pure and holy!!! Compare *1 Tim. 6:16*. John declares three things about God in his writings: God is *light*; God is *Spirit* (*John 4:24*); God is *love* (*1 John 4:8*). [The mystery religions called their "secret knowledge" *light*.]

and there is no darkness at all in him. ⁶If, then, we say that we have fellowship with him, yet at the same time live in the darkness, we are lying both in our words and in our actions. ⁷But if we live in the light—just as he is in the light—then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, makes us clean from every sin.

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and there is no truth in us. ⁹But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and make us clean from all our wrongdoing. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make a liar out of God, and his word is not in us.

at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not put the truth into practice. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his word has no place in our lives.

6. **If, then.** Here is a *test* of fellowship. Since light symbolizes purity and holiness, darkness symbolizes sin, evil, error, etc. **We are lying.** "If we claim fellowship with God and Christ, yet live lives dark with sin, we show ourselves to be liars!"

7. **But if we.** This is the other side of the test of fellowship. "If our lives are filled with the light of purity and holiness, this shows the truthfulness of our claims to fellowship with the Father and the Son." **Fellowship with one another.** John is not speaking about the fellowship of Christians with each other, but with the Father and his Son. **The blood of Jesus.** The blood symbolizes God's act in Christ to set men free. Compare *Rev. 7:14; 12:11; Heb. 9:12-14. Makes us clean.* John uses the *present continuous* verb form to emphasize that *living in the light* keeps us in the *fellowship* where the blood of Jesus *continuously makes us clean* from sin. But if we walk in darkness, we lose this fellowship! The blood of Christ's death declares the reality of the incarnation, which in turn makes possible the fellowship with the Father and the Son and the continuous forgiveness available to those who remain in this fellowship.

8. **That we have no sin.** Some were making the claim that they had no sins at all because they had reached perfection in this life! What they actually were doing was to say that the gospel allowed them to do everything without it being counted as sin. **We deceive ourselves.** "If you say that you have progressed on beyond *being put right with God* and no longer have any need of the forgiveness which the blood of Jesus offers, you are far away from the truth and are deceiving yourself!" Compare *Rom. 7:14-25* and notes.

9. **But if we.** The forgiveness which the blood of Jesus offers to Christians, requires a human response to *reach out to seize it!* **Confess.** God will forgive the Christian every sin which is confessed to Him. Confession is the first step toward repentance and forgiveness. See notes on *Acts 8:20-24*.

10. **If we say.** If we refuse to confess our sin to God, we are by our *refusal* saying that we have not sinned. Since God says we have sinned (*Rom. 3:23; James 1:13-15*), we call Him a liar when we deny it, as some were doing. As a result, his word is not in us, when we deny that we have sinned. **Note:** these words of John are not written to outsiders, but to members of the messianic community! Since John writes at the close of the first century, he is writing to many second and third generation Christians. John is emphasizing the Christian's *constant need* for the saving power of Christ!!! It is the Christian who cannot claim he has not sinned! It is the Christian who must find forgiveness by confessing his sins to God! *Acts 2:38* is to outsiders; *1 John 1:9* is to Christians!

Christ Our Helper

2 I write you this, my children, so that you will not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have Jesus Christ, the righteous, who pleads for us with the Father. ²And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only, but also the sins of all men.

³If we obey God's commands, then we are sure that we know him. "If someone says, "I do know him," but does not obey his commands, such a person is a liar and there is no truth in him. ⁵But whoever obeys his word is the one whose love for God has really been made perfect. This is how we can be sure that we live in God: "whoever says that he lives in God should live just as Jesus Christ did."

2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteousness One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

We can be sure we know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

1. **I write you this.** "I write to you that God will keep his promise and do what is right by forgiving your sins. But you must not take this as permission to sin, because you must not sin! Instead, you must try to be holy!" It is a paradox that the Christian lives in *confident desperation!* John speaks of two kinds of sin (*1 John 5:16-17*). Even though a Christian is set free from sin and put right with God through the *imputed righteousness* of Christ (*Rom. 8:1-4*), still he must continually be at war with his (her) human nature (*2 Pet. 1:10; 3:17*). See the Introduction to this Letter. **My Children.** John writes with the love of a father to his children. **But if anyone does sin.** In the first chapter John shows that no Christian is completely without sin. Our sin is rebellion against God! But if we do sin, betrayed by our weak human nature, there is a way for Christians to be forgiven! **Who pleads for us.** Christ is our Helper, the Holy Spirit is *another* Helper! Both plead with God for us (*Rom. 8:26*), but only Jesus brings God and men together as a mediator (*1 Tim. 2:5*).

2. **Is the means.** This is a form of the same Greek word used to describe *the place where sins are forgiven* (see note on *Heb. 9:5*). "Our Helper does not plead that we are innocent, but pleads the **MERIT** of his *crucified body* as the means of our forgiveness! Knowing this teaches us that *sin and forgiveness are not make believe!!! The sins of all men.* "So great is the merit of *Christ-on-the-cross*, that *whoever is thirsty* may accept the water of life as a gift (*Rev. 22:17*).

3. **If we obey.** Some said as soon as you *knew* there was a True God, you had eternal life, regardless of how you lived. John is saying that the only way to *identify* one who does *know God*, is by **THEIR OBEYING** God's commands. Compare *James 2:19* and note.

4. **If someone says.** Talk is cheap! Actions really show what a person does *in fact* believe! The one who claims to know God, but does not obey God's commands, proves both that he is a liar and that he does not know the truth of God.

5. **But whoever obeys.** "To obey is to develop this love by which we come to know Him and be like Him." Obedience is both the result and the proof of love. **This is how.** "Obedience is how we can know we live in fellowship with God!"

6. **Should live just as Jesus Christ did.** This is what *obedience* means. Compare *John 15:4* and note, also note on the third use of law at the end of *Rom. 3:31*.

The New Command

⁷My dear friends, this command I write you is not new; it is the old command, the one you have had from the very beginning. The old command is the message you have already heard. ⁸However, the command I write you is new, and its truth is seen in Christ and also in you. For the darkness is passing away, and the real light is already shining.

⁹Whoever says that he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is in the darkness to this very hour. ¹⁰Whoever loves his brother stays in the light, and so there is nothing in him that will cause someone else to sin. ¹¹But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness; he walks in it and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has made him blind.

¹²I write to you, my children, because your sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ's name.

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

7. **This command.** "When I tell you that by obeying the word of Christ, the love for God is made perfect in you, I am writing you an old command. Moses spoke it (*Deut. 18:15*), and God spoke it at Christ's baptism (*Matt. 3:17*) and transfiguration (*Matt. 17:5*). We have told you about this from the beginning." [Johnson connects this with *John 13:34-35*.]

8. **However.** "This command I write to you to live just as Jesus Christ did, is new. Its truth is seen in Christ as he laid down his life for men (mankind), and its truth is also seen in you as you live just as he did." For the darkness of paganism and Judaism is passing away, and the real light of Christ's teaching and example is already shining and teaches you to lay down your lives for your brothers (includes sisters] as He did.

9. **Yet hates his brother.** "He says this and thinks he is in the light, but he has never seen the light! It has never shone on him, and he still stands in darkness!" [This does not contradict *Luke 14:25*. Compare *John 12:25*.]

10. **Whoever loves his brother.** "This one not only sees the light, but stays in it!!!" And so there is nothing in him. *MacKnight* says: "Schismatics and heretics, on pretence of having attained to a greater knowledge of the truth, and a greater purity of conduct than others, think themselves authorized to hate and persecute those who differ from them in opinion and practice." John is saying that one who loves his brother will not act that way! [Johnson takes this as the NIV has translated it. The meaning does not change.]

11. **But whoever.** "The one who hates his brother is blind, and does not know he is blind. The darkness of sin and error prevents him from being able to see what is right, and it kills the good impulses which he might have. There is no neutral ground between love and hate. Love is actively doing good to others. Anything less than this is hate, just as indifference to the Good News is effective rejection of it (*Matt. 22:5-7*)."

12. **Because your sins are forgiven.** "You are not unbelievers and I do not mean to doubt the sincerity of your faith. It is because I know your sins are forgiven by the merit of Christ's name (see note on *Acts 2:38*), that I write to you."

¹³I write to you, fathers, because you know him who has existed from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have defeated the Evil One.

¹⁴I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who has existed from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong; the word of God lives in you and you have defeated the Evil One.

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not have the love for the Father in you. ¹⁶Everything that belongs to the world—what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of—none of this comes from the Father; it all comes

I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.

I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Do Not Love the World

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and his pride in possessions—comes not from the Father but from

13. **Fathers.** "I write to you mature Christians (both men and women) because you do know the Eternal Jesus the Christ." **Young men.** "I write to you less-mature Christians (both men and women), because you have already defeated the Evil One and resisted apostasy from the faith."

14. **Children.** [The chapter and verse divisions date from the 16th century.] "I write to you new Christians (both men and women), because you know the Father and can say, 'Father, my Father' (*Rom. 8:15*)." **I write to you.** In the Hebrew idiom, John repeats what he has just said to emphasize it!

15. **Do not love the world.** Compare *James 4:4* and note. John does not mean our material universe, because this world is God's creation and is good (*Gen. 1:31; 1 Tim. 4:4*). Neither is it wicked people themselves, since God loves the world (*John 3:16*) of people whom he has created. John speaks of the world or cosmos of darkness!!! Human society is organized *against* God, and therefore against the Christian. Christians must be careful about their loyalties, and not allow themselves to oppose God! Compare *Rev. 13:14-18; 18:4* and notes. Everything belongs to the Christian and is his to use (*1 Cor. 3:21-23*), but the whole world becomes an *idol* for the one who does not **ACTIVELY LOVE** God!

16. **Everything.** John describes the *world* of *verse 15* to show what he means. **What the sinful self desires.** A passionate desire for forbidden things. *Augustine* thought it meant immoral desires. John does not mean our physical bodies or our natural desires. He means we sin when Satan tempts us to use these natural desires in evil ways. Compare *James 1:14-15; Gal. 5:16-18* and notes. **What people see and want.** Greed for luxury, houses, clothes, etc. The list is long! **That people are so proud of.** Boasting about titles, rank, power, wealth, etc. See how Christ described it in *Luke 18:9-12; Matt. 23:5-7*. These three factors can also be seen in the temptation of Jesus. See *Matt. 4:1-11* and notes.

from the world. ¹⁷The world and everything in it that men desire is passing away; but he who does what God wants lives forever.

The Enemy of Christ

¹⁸My children, the end is near! You were told that the Enemy of Christ would come; and now many enemies of Christ have already appeared, and so we know that the end is near. ¹⁹These people really did not belong to our group, and that is why they left us; if they had belonged to our group, they would have stayed with us. But they left so that it might be clear that none of them really belonged to our group.

²⁰But you have had the Holy Spirit poured out on you by Christ, and so all of you know the truth. ²¹I write you, then, not because you do not know the truth; instead, it is because you do know it, and also know that no lie ever comes from the truth.

the world. The world and its 17
desires pass away, but the
man who does the will of God
lives forever.

Warning Against Antichrists

Dear children, this is the 18
last hour; and as you have
heard that the antichrist is
coming, even now many anti-
christs have come. This is
how we know it is the last
hour. They went out from us, 19
but they did not really belong
to us. For if they had be-
longed to us, they would have
remained with us; but their
going showed that none of
them belonged to us.

But you have an anointing 20
from the Holy One, and all
of you know the truth. I do 21
not write to you because you
do not know the truth, but
because you do know it and
because no lie comes from

17. **Is passing away.** This is the cycle of Babylon that we see in *Rev. ch 18*. See notes there. Those who make the things of this world their "god" are doomed to failure! Wealth, power, fame, honor, and such things, are all passing away continuously. People hoard money, and inflation steals its value. See *Luke 16:1-9* and notes. **But he who does.** "You find eternal life by making yourself a living sacrifice to God!" See *Rom. 12:1-2* and notes.

18. **The end is near!** We find this sort of statement made again and again in the New Testament. We live in the *last days* (*Acts 2:17* and note), but these have been continuing for almost two thousand years now. What John and the others are saying, is that we live in a "*last-hour situation*," where it is possible that Jesus might come at any moment! **The Enemy of Christ.** The NIV uses the word *antichrist*, but this word has been distorted by popular usage. Note that John says *many have already appeared* at the time he writes this!!! Compare what Paul said in *2 Thess. 2:5-12* and notes. **The end is near.** John was *inspired*, and it is unlikely he would expect the Lord to come in his lifetime. What John must have in mind is the *cycle of Armageddon* (*Rev. 11:4-14* and notes).

19. **These people.** Note that *each* of these is an *enemy of Christ* (antichrist). It may be that these people were never really genuine Christians, or it may be that they once actually held the faith they now renounce (compare *Heb. 6:4-6*; *1 John 5:16-17*). It is plain that they did not LOVE Jesus, and that they left Christ of their own free will. Compare *1 Tim. 1:19-20*; *4:1-4*; *2 Tim. 3:1-9*; *2 Pet. 2:1-3*; *Jude; Rev. 2:6, 14, 15, 20*. **So that it might be clear.** See Paul's statement in *1 Cor. 11:19*.

20. **But you have had.** All genuine Christians are Spirit-filled (but not all have miraculous powers). See *2 Cor. 1:21-22*; *Acts 5:32*; *Rom. 8:26* and notes. Some of those to whom John writes would have the miraculous gift of being able to identify what was true from what was false (*1 Cor. 12:10*). We have God's Word in written form to measure and identify *truth*. See also note on *Heb. 10:29*.

21. **I write to you, then.** "I am writing this to you, not because you are ignorant of the life of the Logos in human form, but because you do know it! You also know that none of the lies being taught by the false teachers about Christ, form any part of the TRUTH of the Good News."

²²Who, then, is the liar? It is he who says that Jesus is not the Christ. This one is the Enemy of Christ—he rejects both the Father and the Son. ²³For whoever rejects the Son also rejects the Father; whoever accepts the Son has the Father also.

²⁴Be sure, then, to keep in your hearts the message you heard from the beginning. If you keep what you heard from the beginning, then you will always live in union with the Son and the Father. ²⁵And this is what Christ himself promised to give us—eternal life.

²⁶I write you this about those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷But as for you, Christ has poured out his Spirit on you. As long as his Spirit remains in you, you do not need anyone to teach you. For his Spirit teaches you about everything, and what he teaches is true, not false. Obey the Spirit's teaching, then, and remain in Christ.

the truth. Who is the liar? It ²²
is the man who denies that
Jesus is the Christ. Such a
man is the antichrist—he
denies the Father and the
Son. No one who denies the ²³
Son has the Father; whoever
acknowledges the Son has
the Father also.

See that what you have ²⁴
heard from the beginning re-
mains in you. If it does, you
also will remain in the Son
and in the Father. And this ²⁵
is what he promised us—
even eternal life.

I am writing these things ²⁶
to you about those who are
trying to lead you astray. As ²⁷
for you, the anointing you
received from him remains
in you, and you do not need
anyone to teach you. But as
his anointing teaches you a-
bout all things and as that
anointing is real, not count-
erfeit—just as it has taught
you, remain in him.

22. Who, then, is the liar? "You can very easily tell who it is that is lying about Jesus Christ the Messiah!!! It is the one who says that Jesus was *only human*, and not *the Christ!*" (See Introduction to this Letter.) **This one.** "Whoever refuses to believe what the Father said about the Son. (*1 John 5:6* and note), *that the man Jesus is the Son*, is the Enemy of Christ!!!" If we believe John, there is not *one* Antichrist, but *many Antichrists!!!* Everyone who denies the reality of the Logos coming as a human being is an Antichrist! **He rejects both.** "The one who says Jesus was only human and not divine, is rejecting the Father as well!!!"

23. For whoever. "Some reject the Son and claim to have the Father. This cannot be true! If you reject the Son, you have also rejected the Father who sent Him!!!" **Whoever accepts.** "If you accept the Son, you have also accepted the Father who sent Him!!!"

24. To keep in your hearts. "Be sure to hold firm the truth we taught you about the Logos becoming a human being (*John 1:14*). In doing this you will keep your fellowship with the Father and the Son (*1 John 1:7*)."

25. And this is what. "You will find great happiness and jubilation in that *fellowship*, because *Christ* Jesus himself promised to give us *eternal life!!!*"

26. I write you this. "I want to warn you about the Enemies of Christ. Be on your guard against them!!! They want to steal your promise!!!"

27. But as for you. This verse does not teach a *continuous revelation* (see *Heb. 1:1-2* and notes), nor that we are to be led by an *inner light*. It teaches that God makes available a *means* for us to know what is in fact the truth! Some had a gift from the Spirit (see notes on *verse 20*), and we have the Scriptures. They are the Spirit's message to us!! We obey the Spirit by obeying the New Testament which He produced.

²⁸Yes, my children, remain in him, so that we may be full of courage when he appears and need not hide in shame from him on the Day he comes.

²⁹You know that Christ is righteous; you should know, then, that everyone who does what is right is God's child.

Children of God

3 See how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children—and so, in fact, we are. This is why the world does not know us: it has not known God. ²My dear friends, we are now God's children, but it is not yet clear what we shall become. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall become like him, because we shall see him as he really is. ³Everyone who has this hope in Christ keeps himself pure, just as Christ is pure.

⁴Whoever sins is guilty of breaking God's law;

Children of God

And now, dear children, ²⁸ continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

If you know that he is ²⁹ righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.

3 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are ² children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone ³ who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Everyone who sins breaks ⁴ the law; in fact, sin is law-

28. Remain in him. "Do not make the mistake of abandoning Christ!!! Remain in Him and in the Good News, so that we, your teachers, may be full of courage about your salvation when He appears on the Day He comes to judge the world!!!!"

29. You know. "You already know that Christ is righteous. Doing what is right, then, is proof that we are God's child!!!!" See note on *verse 3*. The abrupt movement from *Christ is righteous* to *God's child* shows John's sense of the *oneness* of the Father and the Son. See *John 10:30* and note. See also note on *Rom. 16:27*. The apostles were "Monotheistic-Trinitarians."

1. The Father has loved us! *Christ-on-the-cross* is the declaration of God's love for us (*John 3:16*)!!! "See how much the Father has loved us Jews and Gentiles who do what is right (*1 John 2:29*)! We are God's children!" **This is why.** "The world knows the children of the pagan gods, but the world will not admit that we are God's children, because the world does not know God! The world does not understand the nature and character of God!"

2. We are now God's children. "The world may hate us and persecute us, but even now we are already God's children!" **But it is not yet clear.** "We have not been told the details of our future glory. We could not now understand it, since it must be experienced to be understood!" **But we know.** "We know that when Christ comes to judge the world (*1 John 2:28*), we shall become like him (*Phil. 3:20-21*), because we shall see him as he really is, and shall live with him forever!!!!" (1) To see God is to be like Him! *Matt. 5:8* and note. (2) To see God *transfigures*, even in this life (*2 Cor. 3:18*). [Compare note on *1 John 2:29*.]

3. Everyone. "Everyone who has this hope of seeing God and of becoming like Him (*John 17:24*) and of living with Him forever, keeps himself pure." Compare *verse 8*.

4. Whoever sins. Some said God did not count sin against one who believed in Him. (See Introduction to this Letter.) John is talking about a continuous action. "One who continues to sin is breaking God's law, and will be severely punished for it (if he does not turn away from his sins), no matter what the false teachers may tell you!" **Because sin is.** All sin is a breaking of God's law, whether it is one sin or a continuous action. Sin is lawlessness! (See notes on *Law, Rom. 3:31*.)

because sin is a breaking of the law. ⁵You know that Christ appeared in order to take away men's sins, and that there is no sin in him. ⁶So everyone who lives in Christ does not continue to sin; but whoever continues to sin has never seen him or known him.

⁷Let no one deceive you, children! Whoever does what is right is righteous, just as Christ is righteous. ⁸Whoever continues to sin belongs to the Devil, because the Devil has sinned from the very beginning. The Son of God appeared for this very reason, to destroy the Devil's works.

⁹Whoever is a child of God does not continue to sin, because God's very nature is in him; and because God is his Father, he cannot continue to sin. ¹⁰Here is the clear difference between God's children and the Devil's children: anyone who does not do what is right, or does not love his brother, is not God's child.

5 lessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. This is how we know 10 who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; neither is anyone who does not love his brother.

5. **You know.** "The very reason that Christ appeared in human form was for the purpose of taking away men's sins! This shows how certain punishment is if you purposely go on sinning!" **There is no sin in him.** "This proves he does not allow us to continue to sin! We are like him when we quit sinning!"

6. **Does not continue to sin.** Both the TEV and the NIV bring out the fact that the Greek uses the *present continuous tense*. All Christians sin on the spur of the moment (1 John 1:8-10). But Christians do not purposely go on sinning continuously!!! See verse 9. **But whoever continues.** "The one who makes a habit of sin has never really seen Him, even though he may have seen Christ as a human being, and does not know either His character or His will, as the Holy One!"

7. **Let no one deceive you!** "Do not let the false teachers fool you with their talk that merely believing will make you righteous even though you go on sinning!" **Whoever does.** "It is the one who makes a habit of doing what is right who has the same righteous character that Christ has!"

8. **Whoever continues to sin.** "The one who purposely makes a habit of sin shows by this that he belongs to the Devil (see verse 12)." **Because the Devil has sinned.** This is in the *present continuous tense*, which shows the Devil has been continuously sinning all during human history, as he tempts people to sin! **The Son of God appeared.** This is why the Logos had to come in human form: to destroy the Devil's works (sin and punishment, verse 5). He did this through his DEATH (Heb. 2:14).

9. **Does not continue to sin.** Again the *present continuous*. See note on verse 6. **Because God's very nature.** MacKnight thinks this is true of the word that lives in us (1 Pet. 1:23). It is also true of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 8:15). **He cannot continue to sin.** "In becoming God's child, we have died to sin! Even though it is true that we do commit single acts of sin, we cannot continue to sin as a habit! God is our Father and we share his moral nature! His divine nature in us makes sin an impossible choice for us!" Compare 2 Pet. 1:3-4; Rom. 6:1-4.

10. **Here is the clear difference.** This is the same as the *old command* of 1 John 2:7-11. Actions clearly identify the loyalty of a person!!! **Anyone who does not.** "Failing to do right and failing to love fellow-man, identifies a person as one of the Devil's children." [In this John is scolding those who said God did not count sin against a Christian.]

Love One Another

¹¹The message you heard from the very beginning is this: we must love one another. ¹²We must not be like Cain; he belonged to the Evil One, and murdered his own brother. Why did Cain murder him? Because the things he did were wrong, but the things his brother did were right.

¹³So do not be surprised, my brothers, if the people of the world hate you. ¹⁴We know that we have left death and come over into life; we know it because we love our brothers. Whoever does not love is still in death. ¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that a murderer does not have eternal life in him. ¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for our brothers! ¹⁷If a man is rich and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against his brother, how can he claim that he has love for

Love One Another

This is the message you ¹¹ heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who ¹² belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. Do not be ¹³ surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. We know ¹⁴ that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his ¹⁵ brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

This is how we know what ¹⁶ love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone ¹⁷ has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

11. **From the very beginning.** "The message of the Good News does not change!!! The message originally announced is still in effect (*Gal. 1:6-9*). New and esoteric teaching about faith and morals disqualifies itself by its very newness!!" **We must love one another.** This is Jesus' new commandment (*John 13:34-35*). It is new in *kind*, because it is the kind of love which Jesus has for us!

12. **Like Cain.** Cain is an example of *hate*. The Greek says literally that Cain *butchered* his own brother! **Because.** "The *bad* in Cain caused him to hate the *good* in his brother!" Compare *John 3:20; 8:44; Matt. 5:21-22*.

13. **So do not be surprised.** "The *world* to which Cain belonged (*1 John 2:15-17*) still belongs to Satan. As Cain hated his righteous brother, so this same *world* will hate you." Those who made a *habit* of sin were making themselves part of this *world*.

14. **We know.** "The *world* is death! We Christians have left death and come over into life! The proof of this is the love we have for our brothers (fellowman)! Whoever does not *love* proves he is still in *death*!"

15. **Whoever hates.** "As a plant cannot be both growing and dying at the same time, so a Christian cannot be both loving and hating. When the *light* came into the *world*, it caused a *crisis*! There is no NEUTRAL GROUND!!!" Compare *Matt. 5:21-22*. Hate (*lack of love*) is a serious matter!!

16. **What love is.** "Christ *acted out* this LOVE by giving his life for us. Rather than hating and destroying our brother, we ought to have the spirit of Christ and lay down our lives for our brothers, when called upon to do so."

17. **Yet closes his heart.** "Let me show you this practical example. If we love as Christ loved us, how can we refuse to help others???" It is easy to be a martyr and die as a hero for Christ. The difficult part is the little things of day-to-day living, the trivial sacrifices and self-denials that no one sees and applauds.

God in his heart? ¹⁸My children! Our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

Courage before God

¹⁹This, then is how we will know that we belong to the truth. This is how our hearts will be confident in God's presence. ²⁰If our heart condemns us, we know that God is greater than our heart, and that he knows everything. ²¹And so, my dear friends, if our heart does not condemn us, we have courage in God's presence. ²²We receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. ²³This is what he commands: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another

Dear children, let us not love ¹⁸ with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. This then is how we know ¹⁹ that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever ²⁰ our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Dear friends, if our hearts ²¹ do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and ²² receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his ²³ command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded

18. **It must be true love.** Talk is cheap! See what James says in *James 2:14-17*. James says *faith*; John says *love*! It is good to *talk*, but we must back it up with *action*!

19. **This, then.** "Only by this kind of behavior, *acting out our love*, can we know that we belong to the truth and the fellowship of the Father and the Son." **Will be confident.** No need to be ashamed! See *1 John 2:28*.

20. **If our heart condemns us.** It is best to make this part of the same thought as *verse 19*. *J. W. Roberts* thinks this is so. "Our heart condemns us because of our acts of sin (*see note on 1 John 2:1*), and we ask in fear, 'Am I loving as I ought to do???' The fact that we are acting out our love will give us confidence. It is a paradox that only as we do see that *Jesus paid it all (Rom. 8:1-4 and notes)* will we be *set free* to make our lives a living sacrifice in praise to God!!!" (1) God knows the worst that is in us and still loves us! What the Christian learns about himself when he tries to be holy, God knew all along! (2) God knows everything, and He sometimes gives us credit for our good intentions. See *1 Kings 8:18-19*.

21. **If our heart does not condemn us.** "If the fact that we *love* will quiet the fears of our hearts, even though we see our mistakes; how much more courage will we have in God's presence if we live so that our hearts do not condemn us!!! If our love shows itself in actions, we will have more courage when we go to God in prayer."

22. **We receive from him.** "Doing what is right and having a heart that does not condemn us are *two sides of the same coin*. Because we are his children, he hears and answers our prayers." Compare *Prov. 15:29; Psalm 66:18-19; Job 27:8-9; Isa. 1:11-15*.

23. **This is what he commands.** John has been stressing actions. Here he shows us faith and love as *two sides of the same coin*. See note on *James 2:19*. **Believe in the name.** *Name = authority*. To believe in *his name* means to believe in everything that his name symbolizes and stands for. **Just as Christ commanded us.** See *1 John 4:21; Matt. 22:34-40*.

other, just as Christ commanded us. ²⁴Whoever obeys God's commands lives in God and God lives in him. And this is how we know that God lives in us: we know it because of the Spirit he has given us.

The True and the False Spirit

4 My dear friends: do not believe all who claim to have the Spirit, but test them to find out if the spirit they have comes from God. For many false prophets have gone out everywhere. ²This is how you will be able to know whether it is God's Spirit: anyone who declares that Jesus Christ came as a human being has the Spirit who comes from God. ³But anyone who denies this about Jesus does not have the Spirit from God. This spirit is from the Enemy of Christ; you heard that it would come, and now it is here in the world already.

us. Those who obey his ²⁴ commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

Test the Spirits

4 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how ² you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit ³ that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

24. Whoever obeys. See *John 14:21-23* and notes. **Because of the Spirit.** Every Christian has the Spirit (*Acts 5:32*). John sees this as a fact of experience that can be used as a proof. Obedience identifies the Spirit within us (*Gal. 5:22-23*). The presence of the Spirit was a strong reason for the Jewish Christian to hold firm to Christ (see *Heb. 10:29* and note). But the experience of the Spirit is easily misused (see *1 Cor. ch 12-14*). John looks at this in the next chapter.

1. Do not believe . . . but test. In *1 John 3:24* John mentions the evidence of the Spirit. Because the false teachers all claimed to be inspired and to have received their (false) message from the Holy Spirit, John reminds the messianic community that they have among them some who can *tell the difference* (*1 Cor. 12:10; 1 John 2:27*) and *identify* those who are in fact inspired teachers. **For many false prophets.** His warning is still good today! See *1 Thess. 5:19-22*.

2. This is how. "Even you who do not have this *gift from the Spirit* will be able to recognize which teachers do come from God." **Anyone who declares.** Two things are here: (1) Anyone who would use the name *Jesus Christ* is by that identifying Jesus with the Logos. (2) To declare Jesus Christ came as a human being is to identify the Logos with Jesus. [See Introduction to this Letter.] *Moffatt* translates this: "*Every spirit which confesses Jesus as the Christ incarnate comes from God.*"

3. But anyone who denies this. "Anyone who says Jesus was human but not divine, or that says He was divine but not human, does not speak by means of God's Spirit!" **Enemy of Christ.** *MacKnight* takes this as meaning The Devil, who is the ultimate source of all opposition to Christ. It was the Devil who motivated the false teachers to teach the things they taught. **You heard that it would come.** Paul spoke about this (*2 Thess. 2:3*). The Mysterious Wickedness was already at work when Paul wrote. John identifies the spirit from the Enemy of Christ as *in the world already* as he writes. Compare note on *Rev. 13:11*.

⁴But you belong to God, my children, and have defeated the false prophets; because the Spirit who is in you is more powerful than the spirit in those who belong to the world. ⁵They speak about matters of the world and the world listens to them because they belong to the world. ⁶But we belong to God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever does not belong to God does not listen to us. This is the way, then, that we can tell the difference between the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

God Is Love

⁷Dear friends! Let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love for us: he sent his only Son into the world that we might have

You, dear children, are ⁴ from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

God's Love and Ours

Dear friends, let us love ⁷ one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live

4. **But you belong to God.** "You belong to God and allow Him to teach you!" **And have defeated.** "You have discovered and defeated these false teachers, because you have God's Truth!" **Because the Spirit.** "All false teachers have the spirit from the Enemy of Christ. You have the Holy Spirit from God!!! As God is INFINITELY more powerful than the Devil, so the Spirit of Truth is more powerful than the spirit from the Enemy of Christ!"

5. **About matters of the world.** Compare *1 John 3:12*. "Do not be discouraged by the success of the false teachers. They tell the world what it wants to hear!" See *1-Tim. 4:14; 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-4*.

6. **But we belong to God.** "We have nothing to do with the world that follows the Enemy of Christ." **Whoever knows God.** "The one who does in fact *know God* listens to what we apostles say, and teaches the same things which we teach. The one who *does not know God* rejects us and our message." **This is the way.** We have in written form all that the apostles taught (the New Testament). Those who hear and do what they taught, follow the Spirit of truth. Those who reject what they taught, follow the spirit of error which comes from the Enemy of Christ. Compare *John 8:42-47*.

7. **Because love comes from God.** "The false teachers claim knowledge is all that is necessary to please God, and they do not love one another. Love grown cold is a sign of evil (*Matt. 24:12*). Therefore, because love comes from God, let us love one another!" **Whoever loves.** John uses a *continuous form* for 'loves.' "Love is God's very nature, and those who love share the divine nature (*2 Pet. 1:4*); and as they continue to love, they *get to know God* more and more!!!"

8. **Whoever does not love.** "One who is a *stranger* to love, is a *stranger* to God also!" Compare *1 Cor. 2:9* and note.

9. **This is how God.** "God showed his love for us by **ACTING IN HISTORY!** See *John 3:16*."

life through him. ¹⁰This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven.

¹¹Dear friends, if this is how God loved us, then we should love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made perfect in us.

¹³This is how we are sure that we live in God and he lives in us: he has given us his Spirit.

¹⁴And we have seen and tell others that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

¹⁵Whoever declares that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him, and he lives in God. ¹⁶And we ourselves know and believe the love which God has for us.

God is love, and whoever lives in love lives in God and God lives in him. ¹⁷The purpose of love being made perfect in us is that we may have courage on Judgment Day; and we will have it because our life in this world is the same as

through him. This is love: 10 not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, 11 since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; 12 but if we love each other, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

We know that we live in 13 him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify 14 that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowl- 15 edges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know 16 and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. Love is made com- 17 plete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

10. **This is what love is.** "This is the example for us to follow. God did not wait for us to love him first (verse 19), but while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8) God sent his Son to be the means (1 John 2:2) by which our sins are forgiven."

11. **If this is how.** "If God could set such an example (verse 10), then we who belong to God must imitate Him by loving one another!!!" Christian love is treating others as God has treated us through Christ.

12. **No one has ever seen God.** John 1:18. "Some may claim to have seen God in a vision or to have heard Him speak to them. But in fact, no one has ever seen God! But Jesus, the Son, has told us about Him. The only actual proof that God lives in us (Eph. 2:22), or that his love is made perfect in us (1 John 2:5), is that we love one another!"

13. **He has given us his Spirit.** John may be thinking of the miraculous gifts from the Spirit, but what he has been saying about love connects this with Gal. 5:22-23. Every Christian is Spirit-filled (Acts 5:32). But one who does not love, shows he does not have the Spirit!

14. **That the Father sent his Son.** John speaks as an eye-witness! See John 15:27; 1 John 1:1-4.

15. **Whoever declares.** Compare verse 2. Such faith implies fellowship with God! Compare 1 Tim. 6:12; Matt. 16:16; Rom. 10:9-10. "God lives in the one who declares his faith in Jesus as the Christ incarnate."

16. **And we ourselves know.** The apostles saw Christ-on-the-cross! They believe (see note on James 2:19) God's love! John's language points to a knowledge and belief that began in the past and continues up to the present (and will continue in the future). Unless you believe that the Logos came as a human being to be the Savior of the world, you cannot understand God's *unique* love!!

17. **The purpose.** "Love is an official heavenly visitor who stays with us and claims our loyalty. Love has been 'made perfect in us' when we are *facsimiles* of Jesus - His visible *portrait!*" Compare Matt. 5:16; Gal. 2:20.

Christ's. ¹⁸There is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So then, love has not been made perfect in the one who fears, because fear has to do with punishment.

¹⁹We love because God first loved us. ²⁰If someone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar. For he cannot love God, whom he has not seen, if he does not love his brother, whom he has seen. ²¹This, then, is the command that Christ gave us: he who loves God must love his brother also.

Our Victory over the World

5 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Messiah is a child of God; and whoever loves a father loves his child also. ²This is how we know that we love God's children: it is by loving God and obey-

There is no fear in love. But ¹⁸ perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he, first ¹⁹ loved us. If anyone says, "I ²⁰ love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has ²¹ given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Faith in the Son of God

5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we ² know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his com-

18. No fear in love. Note that John uses *fear* as the opposite of *love*. One type of person lost eternally is the *coward* (fearful), as we see in *Rev. 21:8*. [We *fear* God in the sense of reverence and respect.] "Fear of punishment never goes along with love; but perfect love to God and man drives out all fear of punishment from our mind! One who truly loves God and man will know that he has left death and come over into life (*1 John 3:14*), and will have no reason to fear punishment!" **Love has not been made perfect.** "The one who fears the Judgment has not been made perfect in love to God and man! For this he has no excuse!" *Bengel* says there are four possible conditions of a human soul: (1) without either fear or love; (2) with fear, without love; (3) with fear and love; (4) with love, without fear. This verse shows that only the *fourth* describes the *true (mature) Christian!*

19. Because God. God's unique love for us in Christ, fills us with love for Him and for our fellowman!

20. But hates his brother. "Hating his brother shows he was a liar when he said, 'I love God!'" Some thought it proper to show their love for God by hating and persecuting all who did not share their views in religious matters. See note on *James 3:9*. *We limit our love for God, by our love for our brother!!*

21. Is the command. It is God's will that he who loves the Father should love the children also! See *John 13:34-35; 15:12; 1 John 3:11*. *You cannot obey the command to love God without loving your brother!!*

1. Whoever believes. For the meaning of *faith*, see note on *James 2:19*. Faith reaches out to seize the sacrifice of Christ (*Acts 2:38* and note). **Whoever loves a father.** This is another way of saying: love for God = love for brothers (fellow Christians).

2. This is how. John has just pointed out that if we love a father, we will love his child also. Love for the child grows out of love for the father. Therefore love for our brothers (fellow Christians) really grows out of our love for The Father, and this demonstrates its *reality* by obeying His commands, one of which is to *love one another!*

ing his commands. ³For our love for God means that we obey his commands. And his commands are not too hard for us, ⁴because every child of God is able to defeat the world. This is how we win the victory over the world: with our faith. ⁵Who can defeat the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

mands. This is love for God: ³ to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone ⁴ born of God has overcome the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that ⁵ overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

The Witness about Jesus Christ

⁶Jesus Christ is the one who came; he came with the water of his baptism and the blood of his death. He came not only with the water, but with both the water and the blood. And the Spirit himself testifies that this is true, because

This is the one who came ⁶ by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the

3. Means that we obey. See *John 14:23* and note. We cannot divorce *faith* from *action* (*James 2:22*). Are not too hard. *MacKnight* says: "To a good man in ordinary circumstances, the keeping of God's commandments is easy, being the delight of his soul." But we should carry this farther, since God's promise is that whatever comes our way will be within our limitations (*1 Cor. 10:13*), and we do have a promise of help when we ask for it (*Phil. 4:13; Eph. 3:16-17*).

4. Because. Old and young, Jew and Gentile, men and women, slave and free, - all who are NEW in Christ are able to defeat the world and resist its temptations to break God's law!!! See *John 3:3,6* and notes. This is how: The power of faith to make people able to overcome the world is clearly shown in *Heb. 11*. *MacDonald* writes: "Every common day, he who would be a live child of the living has to fight the God-denying look of things, to believe that, in spite of their look, they are God's and God is in them, and working his saving will in them." This is one of the themes of Revelation (see Introduction to Revelation).

5. Only he. John's teaching is: that faith in the Logos coming as a human being to be the means to set men free from sin, guilt, and punishment - makes easy the commands of God! Only he (or she) who firmly believes this will be able to conquer the world!!! If you deny the full truth of the Incarnation (Logos becoming human), you rob yourself of the power which the Good News brings with it, which will make you able to defeat the world!!!

6. Jesus Christ. John expands what he said in *verse 5*. Some taught that Jesus was completely human, and that *The Christ* came down on him at his baptism and left him before his death (see Introduction to this Letter). In saying *Jesus Christ*, John is saying they were not two discrete personalities, but one fusion of the Logos as a human being! The one who came. John points back to the *Christ of History!!!* The First Coming is now a historical event (*Gal. 4:4-5*). Water of his baptism. The TEV brings out the true meaning here. John wants to prove the Jesus of the Gospels is The Christ, The Son of God. It was no make-believe!!! The Logos as a human being passed through these physical experiences!!! At his baptism, Jesus Christ was publicly identified for his work of "buying men for God." See *John 1:29-34*. The blood of his death. If Jesus were only human, his death would mean nothing! But as Jesus the Christ, His death was and is the FULFILLMENT of HIS INFINITE SACRIFICE!!! See *Heb. 2:14; 9:12,26*. Not only with the water. John repeats this to make it stronger!!! And the Spirit. The people to whom John wrote knew that the Holy Spirit had testified to the truth of what he is saying in many ways (by miracles, gifts, etc.). The Spirit cannot lie. [We are baptized into Christ's death (*Rom. 6:3-5*); and the Lord's Supper (Holy Meal) points to the blood of His death (*1 Cor. 11:23-26*).]

the Spirit is truth. ⁷There are three witnesses, ⁸the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and all three agree. ⁹We believe the witness that men give; the witness that God gives is much stronger, and this is the witness that God has given about his Son. ¹⁰So whoever believes in the Son of God has this witness in his heart; but whoever does not believe God has made a liar out of him, because he has not believed what God has said as a witness about his Son. ¹¹This, then, is the witness: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has this life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Eternal Life

¹³I write you this so that you may know that you have eternal life—you that believe in the

Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and the three are in agreement. We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have

7. **There are three witnesses.** Two witnesses would establish the truth. John says there are three!!! [A footnote in the NIV says: "Late MSS of the Vulgate add *in heaven; the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth.*" It has been proved that these words are spurious (not genuine), and could not have been a part of the original text. The Expositor's Greek Testament, et. al., discuss this thoroughly.]

8. **And all three agree.** The notes on *verse 6* show how they give their witness. The false teachers who claim that Jesus is not The Christ are to be examined in view of the *witness* which the Spirit, the water, and the blood *all agree upon!!! All three agree* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Eternal Logos who became a human being!!!

9. **We believe.** "If we are willing to believe the witness men give to establish the truth, how much more should we believe the witness that God gives about his Son!!!" **That God has given.** God's witness is a matter of record (*John 8:18* and note).

10. **So whoever believes.** "If you believe God's witness to his Son, you believe in the Son of God (Jesus the Christ). You have this witness in your heart because you have reached out through faith to seize Christ and make yourself part of him!!!" **But whoever does not believe.** "If you do not believe, you are calling God a liar, because you have rejected the truth he declared about his Son!!!"

11. **Is the witness.** "This is the *truth* which God has declared: He *has given* (made available in Christ-on-the-cross) us eternal life, and this life is in His Son!!!" [Christ-on-the-cross includes the *entire historical Jesus.*]

12. **Whoever has the Son.** "Since *life is in the Son* (*Acts 4:12* and note), you must have the Son to have life!!! To have the Son you must reach out through faith to seize Him and make yourself part of His sacrifice!!!" See *Acts 2:40* and note. **Whoever does not have.** "Since life is in the Son, whoever does not have Him, does not have life!!!"

13. **So that you may know.** "I write this so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (Logos as a human being) as I mentioned in *John 20:31*; but even more than this, I write so that you may know that you do have eternal life!" Confidence is necessary to fight against defeatism and certain false doctrines. Note how John's proof progresses: *1 John 1:2; 2:25; 3:13-14; 4:12-13; 5:11-12. In the name.* See *Matt. 28:19; Acts 4:12* and notes. The name includes everything that Jesus is, was, and has done.

name of the Son of God. ¹⁴We have courage in God's presence because we are sure that he hears us if we ask him for anything that is according to his will. ¹⁵He hears us whenever we ask him; since we know this is true, we know also that he gives us what we ask from him.

¹⁶If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray to God, who will give him life. This applies to those whose sins do not lead to death. But there is sin which leads to death, and I do not say that you should pray to God about that. ¹⁷All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which does not lead to death.

¹⁸We know that no child of God keeps on sinning, because the Son of God keeps him safe, and the Evil One cannot harm him.

eternal life. We have this ¹⁴ assurance in approaching God, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know ¹⁵ that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Concluding Remarks

If anyone sees his brother ¹⁶ commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and ¹⁷ there is sin that does not lead to death.

We know that anyone ¹⁸ born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one does not

14. **We have courage.** Compare *Heb. 4:16* and note. God is our Father if we are his child!!! According to his will. (1) We should always pray: "Your will be done!" See the example in *Matt. 26:39* and note. (2) The promise is not: "He will do it," but "He will hear us!" God will answer in His own way. Compare *Acts 28:16* and note.

15. **Since we know this is true.** This expands the second qualification in *verse 14*, Jesus said the same thing in *Mark 11:24*. We are limited in what we pray for by our lack of knowledge (*Rom. 8:26*). Our confidence is that God will not give what we ask, but what we really need! But we know God does hear us!!! Compare *Rev. 8:1-5* and notes.

16. **Commit a sin.** John is writing to preserve the fellowship of the messianic community (church). Not only should Christians be aware of the material needs of their brothers (includes sisters), they should also be aware of spiritual needs. As it is right to pray for the sick to get well (*James 5:15* and note), so it is also proper to pray for the forgiveness of one who sins. Christians ought to pray for each other. John divides sin into two types: (1) do not lead to death (*Gal. 6:1*); (2) do lead to death (*Heb. 6:4-6*). Christians are to pray for others who fall into the first class of sin. **And I do not say.** "There are some who have gone so far into apostasy that it will no longer be possible to restore them to Christ. I do not say that you should pray to God for such as these, because they refuse to repent and go on sinning." See *Matt. 12:31-32*; *Rev. 15:8* and notes. *Doddridge* says: "Let us not too soon pronounce the case of a sinner hopeless; but rather subject ourselves to the trouble of some fruitless attempts to reclaim him, than omit anything where there may be a possibility of succeeding."

17. **All wrongdoing is sin.** All sin is a serious matter and not to be taken lightly!!! **But there is sin.** "The Christian with sin on his hands comes confidently to his Father and asks to have it forgiven!!! But the one who has in effect repudiated Christ, seeing sin on his hands, goes away in fear and hates God for his misery! Compare *Rev. 16:8-11* for an example of those who will not repent."

18. **We know.** "The child of God may fall into sin, but he does not keep on sinning! Sin has no power over him! Why??? Because the Son of God keeps him safe from the Evil One!!! See *Psalms 105*. But our security in Christ is contingent on our staying in fellowship with the Father and the Son (*1 John 1:7*). We do have the option of breaking that fellowship (*verse 16*).

¹⁹We know that we belong to God even though the whole world is under the rule of the Evil One.

²⁰We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we know the true God. Our lives are in the true God—in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and this is eternal life.

²¹My children, keep yourselves safe from false gods!

touch him. We know that we ¹⁹ are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the ²⁰ Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Dear children, keep your- ²¹ selves from idols.

19. **We know.** See *Col. 1:13* and note. "Even though the Evil One holds the whole world in his grasp, we have escaped through Christ!!! We know that we belong to God because we are now safe in the kingdom of his dear Son!!! Evidence of this is the fact that we do not keep on sinning, as those of the world do!!!"

20. **We know.** Not *came*, but *has come* and *has given us*. The Eternal Logos *has come* as a human being!!! The world can never be the same, because this fact *stands in history* and nothing can take it away!!! God *spoke* to us through his Son (*Heb. 1:2* and note), and this *understanding* will never be removed from the human scene!!! **The true God.** Jesus revealed the true God!!! Contrast this with the *false god* of the false teachers (*1 John 2:8*). See Introduction to Acts. **Our lives.** Again the emphasis that we are in the true God by being in his Son Jesus Christ. See *1 John 2:23* and note. **This is the true God.** In Christ the true God is revealed to us and in Christ we have eternal life!!! [Some think this says that Jesus Christ is the true God. A *monotheistic-trinitarian* can say this is true (see note on *Rom. 16:27*).]

21. **Keep yourselves safe.** The *false gods* were probably not idols such as were at Ephesus and Athens. John is certainly speaking about the false ideas of God which the false teachers substituted for the *picture of God* which Christ gives us in what he says. Compare *Gal. 1:6-9*. But it could be that the false teachers encouraged their followers to join in the worship of idols (compare *Rev. 2:14,20* and notes). The Christian who follows false gods puts himself in the Devil's power!!!